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Official Records

Fifty-first Session

60th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 November 1996, 3.00 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 50 (*continued*)

Report of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the third annual report of the International Tribunal (A/51/292)

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the activities of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was established by a decision of the Security Council. The Tribunal was established because the bitter armed conflict in the region had been accompanied by blatant breaches of international humanitarian law, the responsibility for which is borne by individuals on all sides. All such persons, irrespective of ethnic affiliation or official position, must be subject to punishment for their deeds in order to meet the requirements of justice and in the interests of restoring lasting peace to the region.

The Tribunal has been obliged to carry out its mandate under difficult conditions. It is facing a number of complex and, in some cases, unprecedented legal, organizational and financial problems. As we have seen from the matter of the false testimony recently identified in the Tadic trial, there have been clear attempts to manipulate the activities of the Tribunal. These call for heightened vigilance on the part of the Prosecutor and the Judges. However, we note that with experience many difficulties are gradually being overcome. Taken as a whole, the Tribunal's procedures are still far from being perfected. We are certain, however, that the remaining problems will be successfully overcome and that the Tribunal will exhibit complete impartiality in its work.

The Russian delegation is grateful to the President of the International Tribunal, Mr. Cassese, for his timely and extensive statement on the report of the Tribunal. Among other things, we note that Judge Cassese deemed it necessary to devote particular attention to the question of impartiality in the work of the Tribunal. We believe that this aim is entirely justified and that it is important to continue to remove any grounds for accusing that body of international justice of bias. To that end, a number of additional practical steps will be necessary.

In particular, the situation with regard to mass graves in Bosnia gives rise to puzzling questions. Although a number of sites have been found throughout the country, the relevant investigations are being conducted almost exclusively on the territory of Republika Srpska. It is only there that exhumations are being performed. It is only there that, in accordance with the recommendations of the Tribunal, mass gravesites are being placed under guard by the multinational force. In our view, this kind of one-sidedness, which casts a shadow over the Tribunal's work requires immediate rectification.

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Another serious problem in the work of the Tribunal is the insufficient level of cooperation from States and Entities in the region of the former Yugoslavia. As is clear from the report and from Judge Cassese's statement, all parties without exception, are at fault to some degree. The Security Council has already been compelled seriously to address this issue on several occasions.

As a result of efforts that have been undertaken, the situation is gradually changing for the better. A number of important steps, including those of a legislative nature, have been taken by the Federation and Croatia although, as is noted in the report, the cooperation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Republika Srpska remains restricted and insufficient. We believe that the opening of a mission of the Tribunal in Belgrade and the recent visit to The Hague of the Minister of Justice of the Republika Srpska should be welcomed.

As far as we know, in the course of this visit, the Tribunal was provided with material on crimes perpetrated against the Serb population and a request was made to begin the relevant investigations, including those on a number of sites of mass graves. Thus, we must assume that the problem raised in Judge Cassese's statement regarding the provision to the Tribunal of a data base for investigating crimes against the Serbs has been largely solved. We presume that a rapid response to the legitimate requests of the Minister of Justice of the Republika Srpska will play a key role in stimulating the cooperation of the Bosnian Serbs.

In conclusion, I would briefly touch on the role and place of the Tribunal in our overall efforts to settle the conflict in the region of the former Yugoslavia. We are convinced that the Tribunal, as an international legal body, should be entirely free from outside influences and political considerations. On the other hand, as was noted by Mr. Cassese, ignoring the overall political context does not appear to be possible. We believe this assessment to be fair in the sense that the activity of the Tribunal must help to restore peace in the region by adopting a balanced and considered approach to implementing the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.

Mr. Escovar-Salom (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The International Tribunal dealing with crimes perpetrated in the course of the Yugoslav crisis was established in response to an international need. It was created to fill a vacuum in international law and to defend values of culture and civilization and international law.

As Chairman of the Sixth Committee, I feel the statements that have been made today are enormously important, given their impact on the future of international legality.

The President of the Tribunal, Mr. Cassese, and other speakers today have expressed views, opinions and experiences that must be taken into account if we are to build a better, more efficient and far-reaching international order in which we can place our trust, so that the atrocities we witnessed in the former Yugoslavia shall never be repeated.

We have principles to defend, but now we must simply accumulate experiences such as those described today in this debate. Whatever can be said either for or against the experience that began with the establishment of the International Tribunal will be useful to the international community and the future development of international law. It is important to test and perfect this experiment if we wish to enhance the credibility of international institutions.

I do not wish at this time to address the very important specific aspects mentioned by the President of the Tribunal and other speakers today. I wish only to focus on the importance of this experience to the creation and strengthening of future international institutions.

Today, the Sixth Committee is undertaking the preparatory work for the planned international criminal court. The creation of that institution is very important and the experience that we are gaining today in the case of Yugoslavia will thus be useful in the future.

Mr. Khan (Pakistan): We would like to convey our profound appreciation to Judge Antonio Cassese, the President of the International Tribunal, for his outstanding success in assembling and operationalizing the entire normative and logistical infrastructure of the Tribunal in a period of two years. Given the financial constraints, it is indeed a commendable achievement.

It is an obligation of the international community to stem grave violations of human rights in situations in which crimes against humanity — including genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and the use of rape and sexual abuse as instruments of war — have been committed with impunity. The international community should intervene in such situations to stop the perpetrators of these crimes from pursuing their dark agenda. Once the immediate threat of these crimes has been removed, it is incumbent

on the international community to prosecute those who are responsible for the crimes. It is imperative that the principles of international prosecution and individual responsibility be upheld in all circumstances to maintain a civilized world order.

In this context, the most poignant case is that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the crimes of aggression, "ethnic cleansing" and massacres were committed. The international community rose to this challenge by establishing a Tribunal. For the effective functioning of the Tribunal, the Council prescribed that all States should cooperate with the Tribunal. It is only natural that those responsible for these crimes are the ones undermining the effectiveness of the Tribunal through delay or obfuscation. We must not allow this to happen. We must not allow the non-implementation of Security Council resolutions in pursuance of vested interests. Non-compliance with Security Council resolutions erodes the authority of this body and makes a mockery of the principles enshrined in the Charter.

The impressive strides made by the Tribunal have been tempered by the lack of cooperation from States and entities of the former Yugoslavia. The signatories to the Dayton Accord have formally recognized and undertaken to allow freedom of movement and provide unrestricted access to sites and persons, and exclude indictees from public office.

Despite these undertakings, certain States have refused to comply with the arrest warrants issued by the Tribunal and have not even responded to the Tribunal to explain the reasons for their non-compliance. This is a blatant violation of Security Council resolutions, the Dayton Accord and the Statute of the Tribunal. The persons indicted for genocide have remained in official positions. One State has even failed to take the most elementary step of enacting legislation to enable it to cooperate with the Tribunal, a mandatory measure under Security Council resolution 827 (1993). Others, despite their "acknowledged authority", have failed to investigate and prosecute serious violations of international humanitarian law. In certain cases, attempts have been made to destroy the evidence.

We are grateful to the President of the Tribunal for sharing his views candidly with Member States. He has rightly identified some disturbing trends that are undermining the very purpose of the Tribunal. The main stumbling-blocks are the realities of international politics in the post-Dayton period. Attempts are being made to appease the aggressors. The United Nations cannot go back on its pledge to prosecute and punish the offenders on the pretext of political exigencies.

The President of the Tribunal has termed the persistent lack of cooperation by some States and entities of the former Yugoslavia and their non-compliance with the injunctions of the Tribunal as the most insurmountable difficulty. Those States that committed atrocities in the first place are trying to protect the criminals through different legal stratagems. An extraneous and legally invalid argument of the so-called prohibition of extradition to other States under the national Constitution is being put forward. We fully agree with the President of the Tribunal that the surrender of the indictees, required under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, has nothing to do with extradition to other States. In this particular case, States cannot claim immunity from extradition of the indictees. They will have to comply with international legal obligations. In this case, if we allowed States to hide behind the fiction of their national legislation, we would be paving the way for international anarchy.

We also endorse the President of the Tribunal's observation that the Tribunal was created to dispense victims' justice and not to do the victors justice.

It has been rightly pointed out that the Tribunal does not have an enforcement agency. Unlike Governments, it does not have an executive branch. It is here that the collective will of the international community and the political weight of the Security Council should ensure faithful implementation of the decisions as regards the functioning of the Tribunal.

We have full confidence in the impartiality of the Tribunal. All allegations against the Tribunal cited by its President in his statement are either baseless or motivated. There is no bias against the Serbs. If the indictees are in Serbia and Montenegro, the Tribunal has to serve notices and expect compliance. The Tribunal would prosecute individuals, but it must not be forgotten that those individuals were supported by authorities and an elaborate State apparatus. The most gruesome crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina were committed in pursuance of a systematic policy by the aggressors.

According to the report by the President of the Tribunal, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been by far the most cooperative party — apparently, the only country that is committed to achieving the goals of peace, security and stability in the region. To promote

peace in the region, we must ensure full and timely implementation of all aspects of the arrangements agreed among the parties to the conflict.

The international community must reject a proposal from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Republika Srpska that those persons already accused by the Tribunal be tried in their own territories. Clearly, it is an attempt to justify their refusal to surrender them to the Tribunal. Such a manoeuvre would violate the Tribunal's primacy and infringe Security Council resolutions and the Dayton Accord.

The persistent refusal by certain States to surrender indictees for trial would defeat the very aim of Security Council resolutions and rekindle the flames of aggression and persecution. We should not acquiesce in such illegal conduct. Appropriate action should be taken to compel recalcitrant States to cooperate with the Tribunal.

Let us uphold the principle of justice. Let us not allow the compulsions of *realpolitik* to sabotage our own historic decision. The victims' rights must be protected. The offenders must be punished under the law. Let us support the international order that we are trying to create.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 50?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 30

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/380 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.8)

The President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.8.

Mr. Al-Attar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As Syria assumes the chairmanship of the Arab Group for this month, I am honoured to introduce, on behalf of the member countries of the League of Arab States, the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.8, which is being submitted to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly under agenda item 30 on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States".

The United Nations and the League of Arab States, established at about the same time, were an expression of the hopes of peoples for a better world following the suffering and the scourge of the Second World War. At the time, that independent Arab States joined the United Nations to attempt, through cooperation with other States, to bring about that future to which their peoples so strongly aspired.

The Arab States also had the will to cooperate among themselves to assist those Arab peoples that were still living under colonialism, as well as to develop regional cooperation in order to achieve a better future for their peoples and a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States are, in fact, an exemplar of the cooperation and integration between this international Organization and regional organizations, as called for in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The relationship between the two organizations, as shown in their common history, is based on the shared principles and purposes of their two charters. They were cast in the same mould, and place international peace and security at the top of the agenda.

In the context of the close cooperation between the League of Arab States, as a regional organization, and the United Nations, I should like to stress that the Arab States — in many international forums, specifically, at the Arab Summit Conference, which was held from 21 to 23 June 1996 at Cairo, and in statements in this Assembly — have repeatedly expressed their concern that the peace process should continue, in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and as a strategic choice and option to be secured through the legitimacy of the international community.

But, for strategic peace to be achieved there must be a balanced peace formula. This requires a concomitant commitment that Israel must reaffirm seriously and unreservedly. It also calls for an effort to resume the peace process according to its statutes and on the basis of the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for

peace. It must be resumed from the point reached during the previous Israeli Administration.

We believe that we must continue to promote cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, now more than ever, in order to achieve an honourable peace with dignity for the peoples; a peace which brings security and cooperation; a peace which creates an environment conducive to development and stability in the region and throughout the world. In this way, we shall work together to attain the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The preambular part of the draft resolution before us (A/51/L.8) expresses a strong desire to develop the links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in all spheres of activity. This part also looks forward to further cooperation between the two organizations in order to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter. The final preambular paragraph welcomes the second meeting on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, held on 15 and 16 February 1996 at Vienna.

The operative part takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General, commends the continued efforts of the League of Arab States to promote multilateral cooperation among Arab States, and requests the United Nations system to continue to lend its support in this framework. It takes account of the results and recommendations of the Vienna meeting that I have just mentioned. It expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for the follow-up action taken by him to implement the proposals of meetings between League of Arab States and United Nations secretariats over the years.

In general, the operative part of the draft resolution calls for further cooperation and links between the United Nations and the League of Arab States, as well as between their respective specialized organizations, in order to obtain greater results in the economic and social fields, which in turn are multifaceted and have many objectives.

Proceeding from this, paragraph 10 recommends that the next general meeting between representatives of the United Nations system and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations be held during 1997.

Paragraph 11 requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a progress report on the implementation of the draft resolution.

At their last meeting, held at Cairo on 15 September 1996, Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs, expressed their appreciation for efforts by Arab organizations to support and promote the programme of cooperation with the United Nations. They called for further efforts to develop and support the programme of cooperation between the League of Arab States and the United Nations, which accords with the Arab view point. They also called for intensifying Arab efforts to prepare for the next meeting between the secretariats of the League of Arab States, the United Nations and specialized agencies, to be held next year.

Support for the League of Arab States during this decisive and serious period in the Middle East — a period characterized by the failure to achieve a just and comprehensive peace — is a noble objective which ought to obtain full support from all members of the international community. Adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before the General Assembly would be a clear expression of international support for that objective.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Aboul-Nasr (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As this is my first opportunity to address the General Assembly this session, I should like to open my statement by sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. Your election to that high post is an expression of confidence in you personally, and also reflects the international community's appreciation of your friendly country, Malaysia.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/51/380), which is before the General Assembly today, describes the current multifaceted cooperation between the United Nations, the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies and organizations. The report also discusses some examples of that cooperation, particularly in the recent past, in many fields of cooperation between the two organizations. May I pay tribute here to the ongoing consultations, contacts and dialogue between the two organizations on all levels. The report before the Assembly mentions the working visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Cairo headquarters of the League of Arab States, where he was received by its Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States also looks forward to attending the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly each year and to meeting with the Secretary-General and the many officials within the Organization to exchange views. Such visits, coupled with the regular meetings, reaffirm the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations on cooperation with regional organizations. These meetings between the organizations and their officials allow for a review of a wide range of international issues as well as cooperation in solving many international and regional problems.

I should like to express the League of Arab States' appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to all his assistants for their efforts to promote cooperation between the organizations and for the continuing exchange of views and consultations. We also appreciate the efforts being made to implement the agreements already reached between the two bodies, since the first meeting, held in Tunisia in 1983, until the most recent one between the two organizations and their specialized agencies, held in Vienna in 1995.

The League of Arab States looks forward to the meeting scheduled for 1997, in accordance with resolution 50/16, adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session and reaffirmed in the draft resolution (A/51/L.8) just introduced by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the League of Arab States. That meeting is to be devoted to cooperation in all fields between the United Nations and the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies in order to review ways and means to expand coordination between the two organizations. It will also review the implementation of joint projects and programmes aimed at achieving the objectives of the charters of the two bodies, implementing their resolutions and bringing about a just and durable peace in the region.

The world today finds itself in a new, delicate and sensitive political situation. There is a need, therefore, to strengthen the United Nations and respect of its Charter, enhance its effectiveness and implement its resolutions in order to maintain international peace and security. We would like here to reaffirm the full support of the League of Arab States for the historic Declaration adopted last year by Kings, Presidents and Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The League of Arab States, a regional organization of 22 member countries, is ready to contribute to the translation of the noble principles expressed in that historic Declaration into a clear programme of action that takes into account the interests of the States and peoples of the world, without discrimination or double standards.

The League of Arab States is following very closely the sincere efforts made by the United Nations and its Secretary-General to address the many problems and tragedies affecting various parts of the world. These attempts are continuing despite the challenges facing the United Nations today. The League of Arab States once again reaffirms its interest in supporting such efforts and its willingness to do all it can to cooperate with the United Nations.

Efforts to resolve the question of Palestine and the problems created by the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab land are a priority concern of the League of Arab States. The Council of the League of Arab States at its latest session, held in September, reaffirmed the need to achieve a just and durable peace and to resume the peace process on the basis of internationally binding resolutions such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principles on which they were based, particularly the principle of land for peace. Furthermore, the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States call for respect and implementation, without further delay, of the agreements reached in this regard until a comprehensive peace is achieved. Unfortunately, current conditions in the region do not give rise to optimism, particularly in the light of Israel's continuing attempt to renege on previously signed agreements.

Israel's continuing violations, which inflame religious sentiments, its refusal to withdraw from occupied territories, its plans to build more settlements and its other illegal acts are an obstacle to peace. The League of Arab States calls on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and fulfil its role of moving the peace process forward on the just bases agreed by the United Nations. We hope that this opportunity to achieve a just and durable peace will not be lost, so that we can look forward to cooperation and development. This cannot happen until people's rights are restored and until peace and confidence reign among the States of the region.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the support of the League of Arab States for the United Nations stems from its members' resolve and commitment to the principles of the Charter and its noble objectives, as well

as from our desire as a regional organization to continue to cooperate in all areas with this international Organization. All these objectives are reflected in the draft resolution before you today, which I hope will be adopted by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.8.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.8?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/20).

The President: I shall now call on a representative who wishes to make a statement in explanation of vote. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Rubinstein (Israel): The delegation of Israel has joined the consensus on the resolution just adopted. In so doing, we were guided by the desire to make peace with all of our neighbours, all of whom are members of the League of Arab States. Israel has joined consensus on this item for the last three years. During the past year, additional progress has been made in the peace process. Israel undertook to implement the Interim Agreement, which we signed with the Palestinians. To this end, the Israeli Defence Forces have been redeployed from six of the large Arab cities on the West Bank, and Palestinians throughout the territories have assumed responsibility for their own affairs, including internal security, public order and all other aspects of their daily lives. Israel has established formal relations with additional members of the League of Arab States. We opened interests offices with Tunisia and Mauritania, after having opened one with Morocco in 1994. In addition, trade and representation offices have been opened in Oman and Qatar.

Peace and economic cooperation are intimately linked. Just as we are committed to peace, so are we equally committed to strengthening regional economic ties. We have been encouraged by steps taken to lift economic boycotts, such as last year's decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council to lift the secondary boycott against Israel. We had hoped that these positive developments would find expression within the framework of the League of Arab States. The time has come for the members of the League to take further measures to eliminate altogether their boycott against Israel. As a first step in this direction, the League of Arab States could adopt a decision similar to that taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

This month, the third Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit was held in Cairo, Egypt, under the patronage of President Mubarak. The goals of the Summit were to facilitate the expansion of private sector investment in the region, to cement a public-private partnership to ensure that end, and to work to enhance regional cooperation and development. Business leaders from Israel, from many Arab States and from Muslim countries outside the region met at the Summit and concluded a number of deals that will help to augment the productive capacity of the region and contribute to its broad-based economic development.

In addition, it was agreed last year to establish in Cairo a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, and this year preparations are under way for the Bank's first activities. Israel welcomes the Bank's establishment, with which we will cooperate and assist out of our desire to encourage the general development of the States in our region.

Israel supports cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations, including the League of Arab States. Indeed, this cooperation is based on provisions of the United Nations Charter. In this context, it is regrettable that Israel still does not belong to a regional group at the United Nations owing to the political objections of some Member States. Israel calls upon the members of the League of Arab States to lift their objections to the admission of Israel to the Asian Group. The fact that Israel is currently denied membership in any regional group directly contradicts the basic principle of the universality of the United Nations.

Israel takes this opportunity to call for increased cooperation between the United Nations Development Programme and the League of Arab States for the establishment of joint projects within the framework of regional agricultural development in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Council. With regard to cooperation between the World Bank and the League of Arab States, Israel recommends the examination, as soon as possible, of the Bank's financing of the economic development projects of the Palestinian Council. Israel feels that the Arab world must provide a greater share of aid to the Palestinian Council, to match the aid given by the European Union, Norway, Japan and the United States. Israel welcomes all efforts to advance the socio-

economic, educational, health and cultural standing of the Palestinian residents of the territories, within this framework of participation between the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies.

This is the first resolution on an issue related to the Middle East to be adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are pleased that the resolution was adopted by consensus, and hope that more draft resolutions related to the region will be adopted through the same procedure. However, in order to ensure that that happens, all parties should exercise restraint and refrain from submitting controversial draft resolutions that parties on one side of the peace negotiations would find impossible to support.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 30?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 40

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/338)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.18)

The President: I call on the representative of Costa Rica to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.18.

Mr. Carreras (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before introducing the draft resolution on the situation in Central America, I should like, on behalf of the Government of Costa Rica, to extend condolences to the delegations of Zambia and the Maldives upon the passing of Mr. Paul Lusaka and Ambassador Ahmed Zaki.

On behalf of the delegations of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, I wish to greet you, Mr. President, and convey to you our appreciation for your successful guidance of our work during this session of the General Assembly. You can be sure, Sir, of the steadfast support of the delegations of the countries of Central America in your important work.

I should like to take this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General our best wishes for the success of his outstanding work in the Secretariat of this Organization. Central America is very grateful for the constant support of the Secretary-General in the process of consolidating peace and democracy, and for his active and determined participation in our efforts to transform the Central American isthmus into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The best evidence of this support can be found in the valuable report of the Secretary-General (A/51/338), submitted to the General Assembly on 9 September 1996.

In 1986 — 10 years ago — Central America had reached a crucial point. The long peace negotiations, conducted by the Central American countries under the sympathetic mediation of our brother nations of the Contadora Group, were at a difficult stage. Notwithstanding the constant efforts and encouragement of our brothers from Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, the crisis in our region had reached such a point that a halt in the process had become necessary to enable the Central American countries themselves, after some soul-searching, to analyse the situation and take the decisions necessary to achieve a prompt, stable and lasting peace.

In 1986, thanks to the initiative of the Government of Guatemala, the Presidents of the five Central American countries met in the symbolic and hospitable city of Esquipulas. A true process of pacification and democratization thus began which, under the leadership of the Central Americans themselves, and through a free and sovereign exercise, created a procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America. This procedure, generally known as the Esquipulas II agreement, resulted from the will of the Central American Governments and the support of the international community, and established a series of commitments in the areas of democracy, peace and national reconciliation.

The armed conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador were ended through negotiation and political dialogue, as well as through free and pluralist elections in Central America. The armed conflict in Guatemala has ceased, and we all anticipate a definitive peace agreement in that brother country towards the end of this year.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In 1996, the Central American region is living in peace and democracy. Our societies have reconciled themselves of their own accord, choosing their leaders through free and fair elections, in an indisputable exercise of freedom and pluralism and within the framework of respect for the rule of law. During this past year, the citizens of Nicaragua and Guatemala have elected new democratic leaders through free and pluralist electoral processes, in the context of respect for popular will and in the presence of international observers.

We in Central America have understood that progress made in the areas of peace and democracy must be secured. Our own experience has proved that national reconciliation and the cessation of armed conflicts can be consolidated only through a genuine political commitment to economic development and social justice. We must keep in mind the painful truth that the last decade of conflicts in Central America were caused by centuries-old social and economic inequities, which fuelled the peoples' discontent. From this sad experience, we in Central America have become fully aware of the need to guarantee and consolidate peace and reconciliation through concrete actions in favour of development and the well-being of peoples.

Thus, our efforts for the consolidation of peace have been directed towards the redefinition of our own processes of national and regional development. We understand that our strength lies primarily in the unity and integration of our political, economic and social processes. With these goals in mind, we redefined our old integration system and have established the Central American Integration System (SICA), which constitutes, as the Esquipulas II agreement did, an authentic and specific conception of communal organization. The Central American Integration System has allowed the Central American countries to make definite progress in the establishment of a real institutional mechanism for regional harmonization and cooperation. We Central Americans proudly affirm that never before have we worked together as we do now with our own mechanisms and institutions.

This effort, which was embodied in the Tegucigalpa Protocol and which will be five years old in December, has been complemented by the addition of the Guatemala Protocol to the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, the Statute of the Central American Court of Justice and the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security. All of these communal legal instruments have extended and consolidated the institutional structure for the new Central American integration.

In this context, the Central American Governments attach particular importance to the effective functioning of SICA and have therefore established a system that monitors its operation and functionality, with consistent support from the Inter-American Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Secondly, we Central Americans, have learned that the consolidation of peace and democracy in our region requires redefining our national and regional development model so as to harmonize our efforts with new international realities. Since 1994, the Central American Governments have promoted and defined, from a common perspective, a new proposal for national and regional development, which is embodied in the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, adopted in Managua on 13 October 1994, and was further developed in the Masaya commitments and at the International Conference for Peace and Development, held in Tegucigalpa.

Bearing in mind the development concepts put forward by the United Nations in the context of the Rio summit, we Central Americans have defined and established our Alliance, which provides an integral and sustainable framework in the political, economic, social, environmental and cultural areas, with the participation of civil society. As the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 14 of the aforementioned report, this Alliance "is an ambitious and comprehensive initiative".

We in Central America are aware of this and have therefore united all our efforts, under presidential leadership, to take definitive and unquestionable steps to implement the initiative. The presidential summits held in Costa del Sol, San Pedro Sula and Montelimar during the last 12 months were milestones in the implementation of the Alliance, through the establishment of strategic priorities in the general framework of the commitments entered into in 1994.

In the same vein, the Central American Governments have begun a process of study and analysis of the definition of Central America's terms of incorporation and participation in the new global order of economic and commercial international relations. The goal is to establish, through the identification of our competitive advantages, a new strategy for regional integration in the overall international economic order.

Central America, with its new system of communal organization and with its own model of sustainable development, participates as one entity in extraregional arrangements, with the goal of promoting the progress and well-being of its population. In recent years we have developed systems that link us with the European Union, Mexico and the United States. The Central American Integration System is an observer at the United Nations, and we have recently established new mechanisms for dialogue with Chile, Japan and the Republic of Korea. We are hopeful that these dialogues will soon bear fruit.

In 1996, the Central American countries can proudly show the international community that peace and democracy are indeed achievable in the wake of armed conflicts. Central America is a successful model for the settlement of conflicts and the establishment of peace. Even though, as I mentioned before, this was accomplished by the Central American people themselves, the organized international community played a significant role. Without extraregional support and cooperation, it would be difficult to speak of the consolidation and sustainability of the Central American process. The success of the Central American peace process is thus also an achievement of the international community and of this Organization in particular.

In this regard, I should like to quote the excellent report of the Secretary-General:

> "The countries of Central America continue to stress the importance of the role played by the international community in promoting their peace, freedom, democracy and development. At a time of pressing demands for international assistance, they have insisted on the need for this support to be maintained if the progress made in recent years is to be consolidated." *(A/51/338, para. 19)*

Indeed, in recent years, international participation and support for the Central American process, led by the United Nations and the Organization of American States, has been fundamental.

Let me recall the key role played by the United Nations Observer Group in Central America during the first stage of the peace process known as Esquipulas II; the work done first by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and later by the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador in verifying implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador; and the steadfast labour of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala in the current stage of the peace process in Guatemala.

Similarly, the broad participation of this Organization in cooperation for the development of Latin America has been important, as evidenced by the work of the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America and, later, by the Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE). It is also particularly gratifying to acknowledge the role of the Organization in supporting the reconstruction of Nicaragua and El Salvador, in which the United Nations Development Programme has been a key protagonist.

In this new stage of the Central American process, there are areas which, in the view of the countries of the region, are key to the consolidation and implementation of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. First, in the political arena, it is important to support the rule of law and respect for human rights by strengthening judicial systems and human rights advocates. In this regard, support for programmes to improve tax collection is also important.

Secondly, regarding social issues, it is essential to support programmes to eradicate poverty and extreme poverty, with special emphasis on the issues of equity and the productive transformation and participation of civil society and women. Thirdly, on environmental issues, the promotion of sustainable development at the local level and the protection and maintenance of natural resources are also very important.

The support of the Organization and its Member States for the priorities we have mentioned is of particular interest to the Central American countries. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to request the Assembly's invaluable support for the cooperation programmes which the United Nations is already implementing in this area. We understand that this effort must include an increase in existing coordination within the various programmes and agencies of the United Nations systems.

On behalf of the Central American Governments, I submit for the Assembly's consideration the draft resolution on agenda item 40, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development". This

draft resolution is contained in document A/51/L.18 and I would request that it be adopted by consensus.

As in previous years, this draft resolution is sponsored by a sizeable number of States Members of this Organization. I wish to express the gratitude and appreciation of Central America for their solidarity and support. The draft resolution reflects a shared vision among Central Americans about our reality. But it also contains our aspirations, our dreams — aspirations and dreams that now, as before, we want to share with the Assembly. We know that we can continue to count on the full support of the United Nations and its Members as we face the new challenges.

Mr. Escovar Salom (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The progress achieved in promoting peace in Central America shows without a doubt that the most appropriate way to solve conflicts is through negotiation. When negotiation predominates, chances are that positive results will be obtained, as witnessed by the events that have occurred there in recent years since the signing of the Esquipulas II Agreement in 1987, establishing the principles and procedures that were to guide the comprehensive peace process in the region.

The implementation of the obligations in this Agreement has contributed fundamentally to creating an atmosphere conducive to introducing to the societies of these countries the changes necessary to putting the era of armed confrontation behind us forever and to making way for new forms of cooperation and understanding among the different sectors of civilian life, founded on tolerance and the principle of pluralism.

We underscore the importance of pursuing endeavours to consolidate the objectives of peace, democracy, reconciliation and justice outlined in the agreements reached by the countries of the region. That process is not yet complete, but we should welcome with appreciation the encouraging progress made to date. The Central American Governments and the international community must jointly draft decisive policies to deal firmly with the aftermath of decades of violence. They must also address the problems caused by projects for economic restructuring that have entailed severe imbalances, which in turn tend to become new challenges to the countries of the region, despite the moderate economic growth resulting from those projects.

We have witnessed the consolidation of the basic elements of democratic systems. With the assistance of international organizations, changes to strengthen the electoral process; the human rights institutions and other civil organs have been made. The urgent challenge now is to face the difficulties caused by unemployment, social decay and poverty, as the Heads of State of the Central American countries have recognized on various occasions. Similarly, the United Nations Secretary-General, in his report in document A/51/338 of 9 September 1996, emphasizes the fact that there has been

> "little advance in the alleviation of widespread poverty or in the much needed creation of employment". (*A/51/338, para. 11*)

Accordingly, it will be necessary simultaneously to promote liberty, democracy and development, while maintaining a close relationship between them. Focusing on these three objectives from a comprehensive perspective will lead to the consolidation of peace and security in a region where conflicts have been caused by inequality. Understanding and solidarity in the international community must prevail so as to help strengthen the progress made to date in this regard. To that effect, two relevant events that clearly demonstrate the political will of the countries of the region to achieve those goals are the signing of the Alliance for Sustainable Development of Central America and the approval of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America.

We express our satisfaction with the programmes and projects set forth in the frameworks of the following international mechanisms: the Central American European Union/Group of Three dialogue, the international financial institutions, United Nations bodies and the Organization of American States, bilateral initiatives, and those promoted in the context of the Groups of Friends. In that regard, I wish to highlight Venezuela's active participation in many of those efforts and particularly, those of the Groups of Friends, which have done outstanding work in the peace process in Central America.

In that context, Venezuela will continue to support endeavours to reach a just and lasting peace throughout the region. To that end, we will foster activities to maintain confidence and goodwill among all parties in order to pursue the regional peace process and will continue the programmes of economic and financial cooperation developed by Venezuela in the region with the aim of securing its economic growth, justice, full democratization and solidarity. Venezuela has been

particularly active and prominent in the development of programmes of economic and political solidarity, not only in Central America but in other regions also.

Mr. Nicholls (Colombia)(*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation speaks with great satisfaction on this item at a historic moment of the search for and consolidation of peace in Central America. The approaching completion of the implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador and the forthcoming signature of the peace agreements in Guatemala make 1996 a memorable year for the people of Central America and the entire hemisphere.

The progress made in the region in the struggle to leave behind a violent past is nothing short of spectacular. It is proof that peace is an attainable goal, even in scenarios most marked by confrontation, and that when there is a real will to achieve that goal, dialogue and negotiation form the best and only path.

As a member State of the Groups of Friends of the El Salvador and Guatemala peace processes, Colombia has had the privilege of observing at close range and the vast efforts of those two countries in the quest for peaceful coexistence, as well as the effective and transparent cooperation maintained with the United Nations throughout the process. For that reason, the signing of the peace agreements in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996 next will be a cause for pride and hope not only for the countries of Central America, but also for the international community as a whole, which has given its support to the positive outcome of the process through the United Nations. The Guatemalan peace process stands out as another success for the Organization in its function of supporting its Members' efforts in the search for peace.

It is also another example indicating that the essential element for success in the United Nations activities lies in its ability to focus its efforts on those tasks identified by the Members of the Organization with their free consent, it being understood that only through the will of the parties in conflict can a secure and lasting peace be achieved.

In El Salvador we welcome the fact that in spite of the difficulties and setbacks inherent in any process of this magnitude, the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the peace accords continues, to the point that a majority of them have been implemented. El Salvador finds itself today on the road to becoming an open participatory society in full development, thanks, among other factors, to its enormous efforts in implementing an ambitious agenda of change and achieving the agreed commitments related to the transfer of land and human settlements, the strengthening of the National Civilian Police, the modernization of the judicial and electoral systems, and the ratification of international instruments on human rights.

These are undeniably complex objectives that have required the support of all Salvadorian society and the Government of President Calderón Sol in particular, who has repeatedly demonstrated his unswerving commitment to guiding his country to become a democratic and peaceful society. Similarly, the vision and sincerity of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) throughout the reconciliation process must be recognized.

We are fully confident that the Government will maintain the desire it has expressed to find solutions to commitments pending full implementation. We also wish to highlight the work of the United Nations Office of Verification (ONUV), which, despite infrastructure and personnel limitations resulting from the gradual reduction of the United Nations presence, has undertaken serious and appropriate activities, and the work of the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, who, through his regular visits, has enabled the Organization to maintain a high-level presence in the verification of the Salvadorian process through to the end.

The peace agreements that the Government of Guatemala is preparing to sign with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) will not only end one of the most painful and long-standing confrontations of the continent, but also, at the end of the chapter of the last of the Central American conflicts, show how anachronistic violence as a political weapon is, today more than ever. Peace among Guatemalans will be the product of a long and arduous process that has not been free of ups and downs, but that has always had the merit of interpreting the feeling and firm attitude of Guatemalan society, in the sense that only peace can remove the barriers that hamper its economic and social development. The progress made amid the serious difficulties of the past weeks attests to that.

We believe that this negotiation process, has been vigorous in its choice of basic themes and pragmatic in its operative aspects, and enjoys the legitimacy necessary to contribute to the construction of a new Guatemala. We wish to express our gratitude and admiration to President Alvaro Arzú for the patriotic and decisive manner in which he has advanced the peace negotiations. We

applaud the URNG for its vision and courageous and open attitude. We congratulate the United Nations mediation team on its intelligent and tireless efforts.

Like all reconciliation processes, the Guatemalan process will not be automatic and will require the cooperation of the international community, in accordance with the peace agreements, beginning with the deployment of an adequate military observer force to verify the ceasefire and demobilization. Similarly, the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) should be extended, so that it can continue to offer its cooperation in the area of verification of human rights in the same efficient way as in the past. My country has contributed civilian personnel to MINUGUA since the start of its activities and will definitely continue to do so.

Finally, I wish to express Colombia's satisfaction at being engaged in the exemplary Central American process in the search for peace, harmony and development, through the geographic and cultural bonds that unite us to the region, the close economic and diplomatic relations that we have with every Central American country, and our participation in the Group of Friends. I wish also to offer my country's collaboration in the future work of the region.

Mr. Baena-Soares (Brazil)(*interpretation from Spanish*): In the 13 years that this Organization has been dealing with the situation in Central America, this is the first time that it can be said that that region is at peace. More importantly, it is the first time in 30 years that we see a Central America that is not only at peace but one that is also firmly moving towards political stability and economic and social development.

The region is implementing a broad programme of reforms in the political, social and institutional spheres. At the same time, we see there a strong process of redemocratization. Elections in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua confirm this. We acknowledge with pleasure the joint statement issued last August by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, which, by laying the foundation for a lasting peace in Guatemala, has brought an end to a painful chain of events in the history of Central American peoples.

Central America today is drawing closer to the other nations of Latin America on the road to democratization and institution-building. This is the culmination of the efforts of the Central American peoples and their elected Governments.

The foundation has been laid. However, we must now build everything that has been destroyed by both conflict and nature. There are still problems. The Governments of the region continue to demonstrate their commitments to peace, democracy, reconciliation and social justice. The international community has followed the situation closely through the sad period of crisis and violence, and it must now continue to lend its total support in time of peace in order to ensure that the achievements made so far may be secured.

In recent years the international community has followed the situation in Central America closely. It has been present throughout the long process of the region's pacification. At this moment of reconstruction, when the challenges of development are posing a real threat to the consolidation and success of Central American efforts, it is even more important that the international community make its presence felt.

Brazil believes that the goals of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America and cooperation within the Central American Integration System are complementary and provide comprehensive guidelines for a strategy for Central America's political and social development. In this context, the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies is very important and should enjoy our full support.

Brazil has followed attentively the political process in Central America since the Sapoa Accord and the signature of the Esquipulas II commitments in 1987. In addition, we have participated fully in the efforts undertaken in the region by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations. We have been present throughout the various phases of the OAS and United Nations Missions in El Salvador and Guatemala, and we will continue to lend our support to the fraternal nations of Central America.

We believe that never in recent years have the countries of Central America enjoyed such favourable conditions for developing their potential: peace has been established and Governments express the will of the people. Civil society is becoming organized and aware of the problems of development and social justice. Our support remains constant and will continue as progress moves forward throughout the region. For those reasons,

we are very pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/51/L.18, which is now before the Assembly.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): It is heartening to be able to note that the trend towards political democratization and normalization in Central America has been further consolidated since last year. Economically, efforts to make way for liberalization and restructuring are the order of the day, although widespread problems remain with regard to unemployment and the distribution of the benefits of reform. There is again reason to congratulate the Central Americans on their accomplishments, but at the same time it is necessary to retain a wholehearted commitment to further democratization, reconciliation and development. The continued support and solidarity of the international community remain necessary, but they will to a great extent depend on the will and ability of the Central American Governments to respond to the needs and aspirations of their own peoples.

It has now been officially announced that the internal armed conflict in Guatemala, which started 36 years ago, will come to an end through the signing of a final peace agreement in Guatemala City on 29 December. Norway warmly welcomes this announcement. Substantial advances have been made since the establishment of a new atmosphere of mutual trust between the negotiating parties in the wake of the elections a year ago. At that time, the Guatemalan people saw that peace was a real possibility. In this connection, Norway wishes to pay a tribute to the leadership of President Alvaro Arzú, who has managed to give the peace process a new impetus through a number of bold confidence-building initiatives that would have been unheard of before the elections.

The peace process in Guatemala has been actively encouraged, promoted and monitored by the international community. It was only after the United Nations was attributed a major role as a mediator in 1994 that tangible progress was made through the negotiating and signing of partial peace agreements. The efforts of the United Nations Moderator, Jean Arnault, who deserves the admiration of the Assembly for his unswerving dedication and patience, have been supported by the constructive action of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process.

The recent kidnapping incident appeared to put the peace process into question, but the Government as well as the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) clearly opted for peace, and we are pleased to note that partial agreements on pending issues such as the ceasefire, constitutional reform and the reintegration of URNG guerrillas into the political life of Guatemala will be signed in Oslo, Stockholm and Madrid respectively during the first half of December. We urge the parties to do their utmost to adhere to this programme.

The establishment and deployment of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) represents an immediate and extremely significant pillar in the construction of a new Guatemala. The presence of MINUGUA has given renewed hope to the civilian population that peace, justice, reconstruction and reconciliation may become realities in Guatemala. International monitoring activities should be maintained, and the Guatemalan authorities should act vigorously and wholeheartedly on the human rights recommendations that MINUGUA puts forward. It is the obvious duty of the international community to provide the necessary financial basis for the verification activities and human rights work carried out by MINUGUA.

Peace in Guatemala means more than the settlement of an internal armed conflict. With the signing of a peace agreement, a new phase of reconstruction and reconciliation should take over.
The first months of this phase will be vital, and international support, together with the Guatemalan authorities' own measures, will be indispensable. It will be particularly important to
ensure a controlled reintegration process for the former guerrilla commanders and fighters. Norway has taken the initiative to establish a peace fund which we hope will be administered by the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Guatemala and for which a sum of $3 million has already been allocated. Provided that the Guatemalan Government itself does everything possible to promote reconciliation and development, continued solidarity from the international community could be instrumental in ensuring a good start for the new Guatemala and could thus prove to be a sound political investment.

The signing of the Chapultepec Agreement in El Salvador in 1992 initiated a fruitful process of peace-building to which the United Nations has contributed substantially. As a means to consolidate this process, Norway has supported the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL) and the United Nations Office of Verification (ONUV) and has

participated in the training of the new National Civilian Police force.

Important parts of the Chapultepec Agreement are, however, still not fully implemented. This is notably the case for important issues such as judicial and electoral reforms and the distribution of land. Norway hopes that the Government of El Salvador will take the necessary measures to assure the implementation of the Peace Agreements in both letter and spirit.

The increasing political polarization, the level of poverty, the social antagonism and the public security situation in El Salvador continue to give rise to grave concern. New credible steps should now be taken to pursue more vigorously the political and social transformation on the national agenda. The problem of crime and violence emphasizes the need for adequate judicial instruments. We believe that a well organized independent police force which respects human rights is fundamental for the further consolidation of the peace process in El Salvador. We therefore strongly underline the need for the authorities of El Salvador to assure optimal conditions for the new National Civilian Police force so that it can be a positive instrument in the process of pacification and reconciliation.

The concern many have with regard to the implementation of the peace agreements should lead us to consider the question of an international presence after the expiry of the ONUV mandate by the end of this year. Norway believes that it is still too early for the international community to withdraw from El Salvador and that an international presence will still be required in order to monitor the ongoing process.

In the foreseeable future El Salvador will also need international development aid, and the international community should contribute. It is important, however, that the Government of El Salvador commit itself fully, and allocate adequate resources, to the implementation of the peace agreements.

The free and democratic elections held in October in Nicaragua were significant events indeed. The first transition period after the civil war was thus brought to an end. The high voter turnout in the elections was an encouraging sign that will further strengthen Nicaraguan democracy. The same can be said for the absence of violence in connection with the elections. We noted that international observers, such as the Organization of American States and the European Union, found no proof of fraud, although there had obviously been some shortcomings in the technical and practical aspects of the balloting. It is politically important, however, that, despite the irregularities, the overall impression is that these elections will contribute positively to the ongoing process of national reconciliation.

It is a matter of serious concern that Nicaragua is among the most indebted countries in the world and, even though Nicaragua has managed lately to reduce the debt substantially, the situation is far from being sustainable. We feel that continued support from the international community is required in order for Nicaragua to be able to develop further.

Nicaragua is Norway's only programme country in Latin America, and is thus the most important recipient of Norwegian development assistance on that continent. We are prepared to maintain the assistance to Nicaragua, but we would like to emphasize that international assistance can only be a supplement to national efforts to ensure continued positive progress in that country. We remain convinced that social and economic development is only possible when the political situation is stable. The attainment of such stability is the common responsibility of all political parties and relevant institutions in Nicaragua.

Mr. Castelli (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish):* My delegation is pleased to speak on agenda item 40, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

We have studied the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/338 and share his positive view that for the first time in three decades the region is free from armed conflict, giving rise to institutional reforms that can make it possible for there to be new social and economic reform leading to sustainable development helped by support from the international community.

We join the appeal to all parties concerned to find a negotiated solution to the conflict in Guatemala in order to lay the foundations of a lasting peace in that country.

For decades, Central America has experienced repeated conflict and violence and has been afflicted by civil war and confrontation that left a well-known aftermath of social injustice, institutional fragility and economic disruption. The situation grew so serious that

towards the end of the 1980s there were some two million displaced persons and refugees, constituting no less than 10 per cent of the total population of Central America.

The signing of the Agreement known as Esquipulas II by the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on 7 August 1987 paved the way for direct participation in the peace process, thereby inaugurating the process of democratization and dialogue in those countries.

Fortunately, the Central American region was no exception to global trends that emerged at the end of the cold war or to those for building societies of peace, freedom, democracy and sustained and sustainable economic and social development, thus promoting integration processes.

Efforts to realize these interrelated objectives helped consolidate well-being and stability in the region and thus to establish the concept of representative democracy expressed in the Charter of the Organization of American States, which says that one of the essential purposes of the Organization of American States is to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention, with a view to achieving the principles upon which it is founded and to comply with its regional agreements in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The international community is aware that the Central American region is trying to lay to rest the painful process of internal conflict and is moving into a new stage of institutional and economic reconstruction. If this process is to be consolidated, the express will of the peoples of the region and their leaders is paramount, but it must be buttressed by the cooperative solidarity of other countries. They can channel their assistance through financial, multilateral and bilateral support capable of generating investment and, consequently, growth.

Within the context of assistance, it is particularly important that the necessary international aid be given to democratic consolidation processes, thereby providing the economic and technical assistance needed to deal with the aftermath of conflicts and their painful repercussions.

My country is clearly committed to this philosophy. It has given concrete proof of that commitment in the peace process and in such initiatives as the signing of agreements on technical cooperation in the areas of human resources, agriculture, forestry, fishing and energy, and the renegotiation of external debt, particularly the national debt.

In this connection, special reference should be made to the Argentine Fund for Horizontal Cooperation, an instrument that was drawn up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Argentina and financed with our own resources to provide technical cooperation in priority areas for the beneficiary countries. This programme was implemented quickly and efficiently and demonstrated the political will of the Argentine Government to strengthen its relations with the region and to cooperate in its economic and institutional development.

I should also like to mention our military and civilian participation in peacekeeping operations in the region, such as the United Nations Observer Group in Central America, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala. We have made specific contributions in the areas of human rights and electoral assistance.

In this spirit, we reiterate our commitment to the Central American region, whose peoples are so closely related to our own. We hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Central American region has pride of place in Mexico's international undertakings. We are joined to the countries of Central America by historic and cultural bonds that we are seeking to strengthen. Political dialogue is improving all the time and we hope to enhance our economic relations to our mutual benefit. That is why we are paying particular attention to developments in the region. The strengthening of the region's institutions and the enrichment of its political life underpin the objectives of peace, freedom, democracy and development that we all want to promote.

One of the most outstanding developments that has occurred since the General Assembly considered this item last year has been the strengthening of the peace process in Guatemala. The Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed the Agreement on social and economic aspects and the agrarian situation in Mexico City on 6 May 1996 and the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society on

19 September 1996. The signing of those Agreements marks significant progress along the road to peace.

These broad-based efforts were given what we hope will be a decisive boost on 11 November 1996, when the Government of Guatemala and the URNG agreed to go to Stockholm in the first two weeks of December to sign an agreement on constitutional reforms and the electoral system and to Madrid to sign an agreement on the bases for reintegrating the URNG into political life. An agreement on substantive aspects of a final ceasefire agreement was also reached and the process will culminate with the signing of a firm and lasting peace agreement on 29 December 1996 in Guatemala.

The political will of both parties has been a decisive element in achieving these goals. We would like warmly to congratulate them on their determination and dedication. We trust that this spirit of cooperation will lead them successfully to conclude their negotiations and thereby secure the peace that Guatemalan society has dreamt of for so long. We would also like to put on record our satisfaction with the work of the United Nations Moderator of the Peace Talks.

The extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala this April demonstrates the international community's political support for the peace process in Guatemala. We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in his report that the international community and the United Nations in particular must be prepared to support Guatemala after the signing of a final peace agreement. We believe that political support in response to the request and with respect for the wishes of the Guatemalan people will be an essential political contribution to consolidating peace in that Central American country, which has already experienced 36 years of conflict.

El Salvador has made important steps towards securing the peace that it has taken so many years to achieve. El Salvador is now living proof of how dialogue and negotiation are particularly well suited to settling differences and to showing the value of political will in enabling the transition from the upheaval of war to a democratic and peaceful society. It is also one of the most successful examples of the United Nations contribution to conflict settlement. Support provided by the United Nations Office of Verification is of paramount importance now that the peace agreements are in their final phase. Mexico will continue to support the efforts of the people of El Salvador to consolidate peace and encourages the adoption of measures needed to ensure the earliest, best and most fitting conclusion of this process soon.

We are also aware of the efforts that Nicaraguan society has made to preserve peace and offset the damage caused by war and natural disaster. International support to consolidate progress in the long term will continue to be of the greatest importance. Mexico will continue to cooperate bilaterally with Nicaragua and participate in the Support Group.

There is a new spirit in Central America. It is not merely the absence of war; it is the will of peoples and Governments to build a future of well-being. We have seen important Central American initiatives adopted at the highest levels in recent years. These include the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, the Central American Environmental Summit for Sustainable Development, the International Conference on Peace and Development in Central America, the Social Integration Treaty, the Central American Democratic Security Model and the Programme for Regional Action for the Development of Tourism in Central America.

We are convinced that progress in the political and institutional areas in Central America can be consolidated only if they are accompanied by similar progress in economic development and by considerable reconstruction of the social fabric in those countries.

Mexico and Central America have a long-standing tradition of cooperation, which has been strengthened in recent years. We have worked together in political, economic, commercial, financial, scientific, technical, educational and cultural areas. This has been done with an awareness of the need to rehabilitate and reconstruct societies that have been afflicted by war. The establishment of the Mexican Commission for Cooperation with Central America in November 1990, and the implementation of the Mexican programme for cooperation with Central America have considerably increased cooperation between Mexico and the countries of the region in recent years. This marks a comprehensive effort by the Mexican Government to address the new realities in the area.

The peace dividend is, and should be, greater than that of war. The essential steps that countries have taken to secure peace, and the efforts they have initiated to rebuild their economies and reach higher levels of well-

being for their peoples must be supported by the international community. The region needs financial resources and technical support to rebuild its economic and social structures, with a view to ensuring that they will be able to establish and consolidate their institutions.

Just last October, the second meeting of Heads of State on Government of Central America and of Mexico — "Tuxtla II" — was held. At that meeting our representatives adopted a plan of action and defined a machinery for dialogue and coordination to launch projects and support actions in favour of the sustainable development of the area.

Mexico will continue to contribute to efforts by Central American nations to build a region of peace, democracy and development. We will do this in the best spirit and in the areas which Central Americans themselves define.

Mr. Fuentealba (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My country views with great interest the establishment of firm and lasting peace in Central America, together with the growing consolidation of a democratic system in each of the countries of the region. In this context, we value the steps that Central American leaders and Governments have taken to achieve the goals which have been put forward in this area.

We warmly welcome the agreement between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, as this makes it possible to envisage a lasting peace in that country.

We welcome the constitutional reforms adopted by the legislative assembly of El Salvador.

We enthusiastically applaud the recent successful culmination of the electoral process in Nicaragua, which made possible another presidential election and the reconstitution of its legislative body.

We emphasize the valuable and decisive contribution of the Governments of Costa Rica and Honduras, to the various initiatives undertaken to date to declare Central America a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

Our nation went 17 years without freedom, democracy, dignity, justice or equity. We know what this means and how much suffering it brings. We learned that one has to break definitively the vicious cycle of alternating authoritarianism and democracy, and that there is only one legitimacy: the one that respects human rights and decides matters according the rule of the majority, in honest elections. We have also learned that democracy is impossible where deadlines exist in the absence of goals, which is akin to waiting for the arrival of a future paradise which never comes.

At the opening of the recent sixth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, on 10 November, the President of my country, Mr. Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle stated that,

> "We have made much progress in recent years. Even in the poorest and most remote places, our citizens are calling for better, more honest judges; they are asking politicians to be more serious and more devoted to public service. At varying paces, power is becoming decentralized throughout the region. Mayors, governors and officials are increasingly acting upon the will of citizens. Decentralization is a lengthy road that leads towards self-government and participatory management. Citizens are calling for efficiency, probity and diligence from administrations. This is a democratic demand which goes beyond the pure functional logic of authoritarian power. People know that dictatorships are not more effective than democracies in providing basic goods and fundamental services.
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> "Let us sincerely acknowledge that we have to embark upon a lengthy path to educate children and adolescents in civic culture and to strengthen in the adults the norms of democratic ethics and sensibilities. Schools, the media and especially the family must take up this mission. Nobody can replace the teaching of the essentials of democracy: the love of truth and respect for one's neighbours, society and nature.
>
> "Throughout South America there is a debate on the institutional reconstruction of democracy. Political systems, constitutions, the executive, legislative and judicial branches, the space regime and political parties are all being subjected to careful examination to adapt them to new demands. This institutional resurgence is genuine and deep-seated, and breaks the classic mould of our history, which oscillated between legislative furour and inertia and anachronism.

> "The leaders and the citizens of our countries are increasingly coming to understand that governance requires legitimacy and efficiency. We have progressed because our countries abhor governance without accountability, which subjugates citizens to serve the power of the State. There is no real governance without democratic legitimacy — or without achieving development."

Democracy cannot be imposed, nor does it emerge magically as a result of the harsh punishments which some try to impose on the basis of their views or attitudes, and which overlook the difficult realities that must be dealt with in order for this system of liberty and dignity to take root, flower, and grow progressively stronger within our societies. No country has the right to give orders, much less to use threats and coercion to force us to espouse their views. Peoples determine their own destiny, and that is exactly what Central American societies have done.

As a small developing country, we value in-depth dialogue and cooperation which should be increased and intensified. Accordingly, we are striving to consolidate our strong and undying ties of friendship with Central America. In the same vein, we are attempting to cooperate with the region in its struggle against poverty, in the modernization of State administration, in the strengthening of parliaments, and in increasing trade and economic flows.

In this connection, and on the occasion of the Central American summit held in Costa Rica in July 1996, a high-level commission was established to negotiate a free trade agreement between my country and Central America. This commission will deal with four broad areas: economic liberalization, investment, service and cooperation. Chile has also entered into investment promotion and protection agreements with Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, in addition to the existing one with Costa Rica. We emphasize these initiatives, as they are clear indicators of the political and democratic stability of our future business partners.

Our leaders, including those of Central America, made a firm commitment in the Viña del Mar Declaration to strengthen our democratic institutions and culture; to improve the quality of political life and associated behaviours and customs; to modernize public administration and support decentralization; to create the necessary conditions to increase social equity; and to consolidate the socio-economic foundations that will allow for the achievement of a comprehensive democracy and enable us to make the most of the opportunities offered by globalization. Strengthening and consolidating democracy in Central America requires a considerable collective effort.

The draft resolution before us today, in our view, contains the necessary elements to fashion Central America into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. For this reason, Chile joins in its appeal to the international community and the United Nations system, and in particular to the United Nations Development Programme, to continue to support the efforts of the Central American leaders to improve the well-being of their citizens. Chile, for its part, as a sponsor of this draft resolution, reiterates its commitment to Central America and its future.

Mr. Owada (Japan): In recent years, the countries of Central America have been making remarkable progress in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Owing to their firm commitment to the principles of democracy and open markets, peoples throughout the region are enjoying political stability and increasing prosperity. It is incumbent upon the international community to continue to assist their efforts for democratization, protection of human rights and economic stability. Japan remains committed to doing its part in helping to ensure that the peoples of those countries can look forward to pursuing their livelihoods in a stable and democratic society.

In extending economic cooperation to the region, Japan attaches special importance to three areas, namely, social development, capacity-building on a human level and the promotion of an economic infrastructure, while paying particular attention to the relationship between development and the environment. It also places emphasis on projects that contribute to the region as a whole, such as those that promote tourism, an area rich in potential for all Central American States. In the past five years, my Government has almost quadrupled its economic and technical cooperation to the region, from $55 million in 1990 to $200 million in 1995.

As part of its efforts to strengthen its relations with the countries of Central America and to enhance mutual understanding, Japan hosted in Tokyo this past July the Second Japan Central America Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation with six Central American States. On that occasion, Japan renewed its commitment to support the commendable efforts of the Central American countries themselves towards democratization, sustainable development, economic reform and the modernization of

State institutions. Specifically, Japan announced that next year it plans to extend cooperation for a regional waste management programme and to convene a seminar to assist countries in developing their tourist industry.

Moreover, in August this year, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited the region, where he met with the heads of seven States, including Belize, and reaffirmed the intention to build a new partnership between Japan and the Central American States. He expressed the hope that the region would continue to make progress towards stable and sustainable development and, in that regard, stressed the importance of the electoral process in Nicaragua and progress in the Guatemalan peace process. This visit to Central America, the first by a Japanese Head of Government, is but one more demonstration of Japan's determination to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the region.

This year has seen gratifying progress in Guatemala, where the peace process has reached a final stage. Japan strongly hopes that agreement on a peace settlement will be finalized on 29 December as scheduled. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I should like to pay high tribute to all those who have worked towards that goal. In particular, the activities of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala deserve special commendation. I might add that Japan extended a contribution of $100,000 to the Organization of American States (OAS) in support of the 1995 presidential election in Guatemala as a token of its support for that country's ongoing democratization process.

Recent developments in Nicaragua confirm that the democratic process is taking firm hold there as well. Particularly encouraging in this regard is the fact that the presidential election conducted on 20 October was deemed to have been free and fair. The Government of Japan wholeheartedly welcomes this development as convincing evidence of the growing trend towards democracy in Nicaragua. As a measure of the importance Japan attaches to the democratization process in Nicaragua, the Government of Japan extended over $710,000 to the Supreme Electoral Council and to the OAS in support of the election.

The draft resolution (A/51/L.18) before us commends and supports the efforts of the Central American countries to consolidate peace and promote sustainable development. As these are objectives to which Japan is firmly committed, my delegation has decided to cosponsor the draft. The delegation of Japan strongly hopes that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay believes that the item before us is one of the most important on the agenda of the United Nations, as it relates to the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in a huge area of the American continent — Central America — and its transformation into a region of peace, liberty, democracy and development.

The General Assembly has been considering this item for many years. A long a productive road has been travelled, from the Esquipulas Agreements to the most recent accords, such as the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and on the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society, signed on 19 September 1996 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico by the Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala and the general command of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

Uruguay — a country that loves peace and dialogue and has deep-rooted democratic feelings — has offered all its solidarity and support to this process, both on an individual basis and in the context of various forums, in particular, as a member first, of the Support Group of the Contadora Group, and afterwards, when that became the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action — or the Rio Group, as it was called and is known — established in December 1986 at the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight in the beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro.

Our country has always contended that a firm and lasting peace in Central America, as in any other part of the world, can be achieved only through dialogue between the parties on the basis of strict observance of the broad principles underlying the United Nations and the Organization of American States: non-intervention, respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, and the non-use of force and of the territory of a State to infringe the sovereignty and independence of others, wherever they may be, in Latin America or elsewhere in the world.

That is why we view with great satisfaction the progress being made to achieve peace. Together with our brother countries in Central America, we rejoice in what we consider to be the achievement of an initial goal: the end of war. There have been nightmarish times of sadness

that have caused our people suffering and left physical and psychological wounds that will not be easy to heal. That is precisely the issue that must be stressed by the new stage of recovery that must begin in Central America. Uruguay is ready today, as in the past, to do its utmost to ensure that our brother peoples will have a happy future.

We believe that one of the principal aims of the United Nations Charter has been achieved: the establishment of peace. Now comes the more difficult stage: the maintenance of this peace. We have repeatedly said in this forum that, while the maintenance of peace and security is one of the fundamental principles of the Charter, it is not the only one. There can be no peace without development and no development without peace. That is why we welcome with deep conviction efforts that simultaneously consolidate peace and promote development.

We fully share the concern of the Presidents of the countries of Central America who, in the Declaration of San Salvador II, acknowledged that the scale of unemployment, social disintegration and poverty were such that they had to be addressed as a matter of the utmost urgency. Similarly, we are gratified to note the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, adopted by the Presidents of Central America in Managua, as well as efforts made in the area of economic integration.

Uruguay has always understood that the root of the problem in Central America, as is surely the case in other war zones of the world, is not solely political in nature, but also — perhaps mainly — economic and sociocultural. Uruguay is a country whose people are deeply convinced that the democratic system of Government is the best mechanism that human beings have invented to enable people to live at peace with themselves and their neighbours. We believe, however, that it is not only a form of Government, but also a way of life through which the rule of law, respect for the rights of others, freedom, human rights and the security of citizens can be fully achieved.

Liberty is not possible without democracy; development is not possible without liberty. Full security for citizens is not possible without a clear separation of power between the executive, the legislature and a clearly independent judiciary. However, all this can be achieved only if there is a solid educational base. Democracy must be built on a solid cultural foundation and on the principle of freedom of education, which includes not only the freedom to teach — academic freedom — but also the freedom of the student to choose.

Full freedom, the exercise of democratic governance, the full application of human rights, respect for the rights of others and peaceful coexistence cannot flourish if they are not planted in fertile ground. That is why we view with great satisfaction the establishment of the Culture of Peace Programme, initiated in El Salvador by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which will be followed in other countries of Central America, as the Secretary-General made clear in his report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

It is for this reason that we believe that the United Nations Development Programme and UNESCO should play a greater role in cooperation for eduction; including at the primary and secondary levels. Today's young people will be the leaders of tomorrow and must train and prepare to live in a democracy, which is a synonym of liberty.

The example of Central America should help us to define the concept of the United Nations that we seek for the future. We do not want a United Nations whose job is merely to silence the guns once they have begun to fire. We want a United Nations that will take preventive action, which is why the Central American example should be edifying. Development activities — not only economic, but also sociocultural development — should be one of the priorities of the United Nations of the future. If we succeed in that, peacekeeping operations will become unnecessary.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland): The European Union follows with close interest the situation in Central America. The last year has seen significant progress towards the consolidation of firm and lasting peace in the region and towards its transformation into a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The signature next month of the peace agreement for Guatemala will mean that, for the first time in nearly three decades, Central America will find itself without armed conflict.

The Esquipulas process was instrumental in bringing about peaceful resolutions of the various armed conflicts that had devastated different countries in the region. The participation of the international community, through a significant presence of the United Nations and the useful work of Groups of Friends, has contributed significantly to the positive outcome of the peace process. The European Union shares the view of the Secretary-General that present circumstances place the countries of Central America in a favourable position from which to pursue

economic growth, social justice and further democratization.

Despite recent achievements, important steps still need to be taken in Guatemala and El Salvador. The inauguration of Mr. Alvaro Arzú as President of Guatemala in January this year marked a turning point in the peace process in Guatemala. His pledge to continue negotiations with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) was followed by the latter's suspension of offensive military operations and the ending of the army's counter-insurgency operations. Since then, intensive negotiations have led to the signature of several important agreements containing commitments by both parties relating to the future governance of the country.

We welcome the agreement reached by the Government of Guatemala and the URNG to continue the negotiation process with a view to concluding and signing a lasting peace agreement in Guatemala in December. We urge them to take all necessary measures to achieve this objective and to put a complete end to the conflict that has so severely affected the country. The end of the conflict will enable the Government and the people of Guatemala to turn their attention to the consolidation of the rule of law, further democratization, and the promotion of economic recovery. This is essential if civilian power is to be strengthened and the armed forces placed under civilian control. Central to this process will be the continuation of efforts to eradicate impunity and to achieve the full compliance of all parties to their commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights.

The European Union considers that the United Nations has contributed actively and positively to the Guatemala peace process, helping and encouraging the parties to reach a firm and lasting peace, through national reconciliation, in order to allow the establishment of the foundations of democracy and development in a climate of liberty and justice. The activities of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) have been fundamental to the United Nations action, and have helped ensure compliance, notably with the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights. We call on all parties to implement in full MINUGUA's recommendations. We consider that the United Nations, including MINUGUA, will continue to play a crucial role in verifying the implementation of the various agreements reached between the parties and to assist the parties in complying with them. MINUGUA should cooperate closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in institution-building and in the strengthening of the administration of justice.

In El Salvador, the peace process has maintained its impetus and contributed significantly to the consolidation of a democratic order, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In July, the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador approved a package of constitutional reforms which had been recommended by the Commission on the Truth, and adopted the Police Career Law. The European Union considers, however, that in a number of areas the implementation of the Peace Accords remains incomplete. In particular, further reform is needed in the field of public security, including the institutional development of the National Civilian Police and the National Academy of Public Security, institutions to which the European Union is providing technical and financial assistance. Further efforts are also required to bring about electoral reform.

The European Union is pleased that the recent elections in Nicaragua were held peacefully. We call on all parties to continue to work towards the consolidation of democracy in that country.

The European Union has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 9 September 1996 on the situation in Central America. We agree with him that the pursuit of economic growth, social justice and further democratization will need to be approached with the same dedication and sense of urgency that was brought to bear on the resolution of civil war and regional tensions. In this context, we want to encourage the Secretary-General to continue coordinating and stimulating United Nations assistance for the economic and social development of Central America, through ongoing programmes and through support for the regional initiatives to promote greater integration.

Two of these initiatives are particularly important. The Alliance for Sustainable Development provides a framework for efforts at development in Central America, with an emphasis on collective efforts to reduce poverty through social integration, human development and investment in human capital, while recognizing the importance of environmental protection. In December of last year, the Presidents of Central America approved a Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. This Treaty bases the Central American Democratic Security Model on the supremacy and strengthening of the power of civil society; a reasonable balance of forces; the security of individuals and their property; the elimination of poverty and extreme poverty;

the promotion of sustainable development; the protection of the environment; the eradication of violence, corruption, impunity, terrorism and trafficking in drugs and arms; and the increasing channelling of resources into social investment. The Treaty also contains important confidence-building measures in the military and security fields. Given the record of military tension in the region over many decades, the importance of this Treaty is self-evident.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the integration process in Central America as well as the new efforts to invigorate the integral development of the region. The San José dialogue has proved to be a lively mechanism of exchange and mutual understanding between the European Union and the countries of Central America. This dialogue has been adapted and strengthened to reflect the developments which have taken place in both regions in recent years. The process of renewing and adapting the San José dialogue to the new circumstances culminated with the solemn Declaration of Florence in March 1996. On that occasion, both sides reaffirmed their resolve to continue the political and economic dialogue initiated in 1984 by the San José Ministerial Conference, adjusting the mechanisms of the dialogue to the new circumstances and focusing cooperation on a number of priority areas with a view to enhancing its impact and effectiveness. These areas were, first, support for strengthening the rule of law and modernizing public administration, and secondly, support for social policies and for national policies to alleviate the social cost of structural adjustment measures, consolidation of the Central American Integration System, and strengthening Central America's capacity for integration into the international economy, including its economic ties with the European Union.

Furthermore, the European Union continues to stress the importance of respect for human rights in its relations with Central America and encourages the efforts aimed at improving the situation in this field. In this context, I would like to recall that the European Union and its Member States, taken as a whole, are the main donor in the area of cooperation for the region.

The European Union trusts that the coming months will see the consolidation of the achievements reached in favour of durable peace, democracy and development. To do this, the assistance, solidarity and support of the international community will be essential. The European Union will continue to play an active role in these efforts.

Mr. Leblanc (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): It is with satisfaction that Canada notes the considerable progress made in Central America during the past year. With the continuing assistance of the United Nations, El Salvador has implemented nearly all the commitments made under the Peace Accords. The Government and the people are increasingly turning their efforts to the development of their society and economy. They deserve and will have the cooperation and assistance of the international community, including Canada.

Just a few weeks ago, Nicaragua held free elections with a high level of participation by political groupings and the population. We hope that, during the peaceful transition from one administration to the next, all Nicaraguans will unite to deal constructively with the important developmental challenges they face. They can be confident that Canadians will continue to work with them, as we have for many years. Canada is pleased to have taken part in the work of the support group for Nicaragua and will continue to do so.

Canada welcomes with pleasure the substantial progress towards a final peace accord in Guatemala. We particularly appreciate the political will and the spirit of compromise on the part of the Government of President Alvaro Arzú and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, which have made this achievement possible. We look forward eagerly to the signature of the peace accords in the coming weeks. We also applaud and support the efforts of the Guatemalan authorities, the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala and others to end human rights violations and impunity. Canada is currently giving careful attention to the ways in which we can support the implementation of the peace accords and the future development of Guatemala.

(spoke in English)

The peoples and Governments of Central America deserve our warmest congratulations for these achievements. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General and the staff of the Secretariat and other organs of the United Nations system for their important contributions to the realization of our common goals in Central America. We would like to acknowledge in particular the essential contributions of the United Nations Moderator of the Guatemala Peace Talks and his team, the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala, the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador — now the United

Nations Office of Verification — as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

As part of our policy of greater involvement in our own hemisphere and in response to the many positive trends in Central America, Canada has increased its own activity in the region. We share with Central Americans many goals: peace, democracy, observance of human rights, human security and sustainable development. We actively support Central America's efforts towards regional integration and finding common solutions to the challenges it faces. This increased cooperation was made manifest during the recent visit to Canada in May 1996 of the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and the Prime Minister of Belize to meet Prime Minister Chrétien and senior members of his Cabinet. This visit resulted in agreement and common initiatives in a number of political, security, social and economic areas and was followed in September by a return visit to Guatemala by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Latin America.

My country looks forward to the continuation of this growing relationship. We believe that Central America continues to be an example for the international community of the ways in which, through cooperation, we can achieve the goals set out in the Charter of United Nations.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): In the decade since the historic meeting of Central American Presidents at Esquipulas, the political landscape of Central America has been transformed. Since that historic meeting in 1987, the United Nations has played an important role in moving the region from war to peace. During the past year, the nations of Central America have made further impressive strides toward peace, reconciliation and sustainable development.

Following in the footsteps of Nicaragua and El Salvador, the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity will sign an agreement on 29 December 1996 to bring an end to Central America's oldest conflict. After 36 years of civil strife, the people of Guatemala will at long last know true peace. This achievement would not have been possible without the United Nations. The United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, in Guatemala and the work of Moderator Jean Arnault have provided essential support to the Guatemalan peace process, giving the parties the confidence needed to reach a final agreement.

We are proud to have supported the parties, along with the other members of the Group of Friends, during the negotiating process. We will stand with the Guatemalan people in peace, providing substantial assistance to Guatemala for implementation of the commitments in the peace accords, which will help achieve economic development, social equality and a better life for all Guatemalans.

With the assistance of the United Nations, the Government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front will have made enormous progress in the implementation of the 1992 Chapultepec Accord. The efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office of Verification have made a singular contribution to the construction of a new, bright future for the Salvadorian people. During the past year, the Salvadorian Government, with the passage of key constitutional reforms, has taken another important step in completing the process begun in 1992. The United States urges the parties to the Chapultepec Accord to redouble their efforts to complete the few remaining aspects of the Accord.

On 20 October, the people of Nicaragua again demonstrated their commitment to democracy by electing a new President and legislature. These successful elections would not have been possible without the support of the Organization of American States and the United Nations and its agencies. We are confident that the newly-elected Alemán Administration will fulfil the aspirations of the Nicaraguan people to consolidate democracy, promote reconciliation and rebuild the nation's economy.

The United States is further heartened by the efforts of the people and Governments of Central America to work together to promote sustainable development, to cooperate in fighting the common security threats, to work together to promote trade and tourism, and, finally, to lower the barriers to trade within the region. Those are the steps that will ensure the successful future of the peoples of Central America.

Mr. Laing (Belize): There is no doubt whatever that Central America is firmly on the road to lasting peace and progress. Two years ago, during the debate on this agenda item, the delegation of Belize reminded the Assembly that Central America is a delicate filigree isthmus. That

remains the case. That narrow bridge between the two New World continents continues to be fragile. That slender barrier between the world's two greatest oceans still resembles a beautiful but delicate woman's pendant.

But that fragile and delicate area is one which is so crucial and central for the welfare of this planet that, happily, it has continued to receive the support it deserves from this great Organization and from the international community. For that, the delegation of Belize, a vitally affected regional country, gives its heartfelt thanks.

Of course, that support would be useless if the actors in the region did not make determined efforts to attain the peace, prosperity and enhanced welfare for which our peoples and all peoples have so long yearned. Those efforts have been at the national and regional levels.

As regards the national level, my delegation must particularly congratulate the respective parties and the United Nations Secretariat for the important impending agreements between the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

As far as the regional level is concerned, the States of our isthmus must also be congratulated for their tireless efforts of cooperation and harmonious action. Those efforts must be intensified. All States in the isthmus must redouble their efforts to help themselves and each other. Since everything in our small isthmus affects all our citizens and consumes all our resources, regardless of boundaries, each and every diverse element must be harnessed. Historic Central America, the wider geographical Central America, and the Caribbean and still wider Central American areas must work in lockstep to bring to the peoples of the area the peace, freedom, democracy and sustainable development that they all deserve.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I would like to inform Member States that, in order to allow the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/51/L.18, action on the draft resolution will be taken at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.61

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

61st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 20 November 1996, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Statements on the occasion of the seventh Africa Industrialization Day

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda for this morning, I should like to remind the General Assembly that today is the seventh Africa Industrialization Day. I have a statement to make in that connection, as does the Secretary-General.

To take cognizance of Africa Industrialization Day is to underline the need to make a reality of the partnership between Africa and the international community to enhance development in African countries. Even though the principle of international partnership to assist industrial development in Africa exists in various policy declarations, successful and sustained demonstrations of this commitment are few.

I make this statement at a time when the General Assembly is considering the mid-term review of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa and when the doctrine of free market globalization seems to have captured the debate on development issues, being *de rigueur* for prospects of African economic development.

Recent reports, including that on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, clearly show that the economic needs and development aspirations of Africa have not been given urgent political and financial priority by the international community. For example, even though calls for the promotion of the private sector, increased industrial development and foreign direct investment, and the reduction of external debt in African countries are regularly made in various forums, harsh marketplace reality shows that portfolio equity investment remains virtually absent, and that less than 5 per cent of global foreign direct investment is targeted to African countries.

It should be unconscionable that financial flows to Africa remain so low despite renewed commitments by the international community to the contrary, and even more so when the majority of African countries have undertaken difficult and unpopular structural adjustment programmes that have marginalized the poor further, depleted natural resources and degraded the environment.

Perhaps the facts and fictions of economic development in Africa should no longer continue to surprise or confound us when we consider today's economic climate. For Africa, such a harsh climate makes it impossible for its economies to emulate the so-called successful models of South-East Asia. South-East Asian "tiger" economies took off when the global economy was growing; when loans, aid and development assistance from rich industrialized countries were still items on the political agenda. South-East Asian economies were also allowed to develop under domestic tutelage which ensured a high degree of strict trade controls and import barriers that enabled local industries to grow.

96-86864 (E)

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Such is not the case with African economies today, especially since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. By all objective accounts, African countries are the major losers in an expanded global economy. How then do we assist African economies to develop capacity building and the educational and technical skills that are the basic building blocks for any process of industrialization?

Despite increased commodity exports by some, on the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sub-Saharan Africa's export growth has not kept pace with the growth of its external debt. This continues to rise to unsustainable and shocking levels. Of the 40 countries that are classified as heavily indebted, 33 are in sub-Saharan Africa; the majority of them have virtually no access to financial markets or to non-concessional flows from official sources.

At the same time, many African countries have had to relinquish considerable economic control to the Bretton Woods institutions — all effective State control of the economy being replaced by the vagaries of market forces and the dictates of trade liberalization. One important factor that has prevented the industrial development of African economies is the nature of conditionalities under structural adjustment programmes. These have geared African economies towards the export of primary commodities whose prices have been depressed for decades, and have prevented new types of industry from developing. Conditions such as these have debilitated the region and prevented it from lifting itself out of socio-economic deprivation.

The Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries Debt Initiative, recently welcomed by the countries of the Group of Seven and endorsed by the joint IMF-World Bank committees, is intended to reduce the problem of multilateral, bilateral and commercial debt of the heavily indebted African countries to sustainable levels. Countries eligible under this initiative will hopefully be able to focus their energies on their economic development instead. Even though this comprehensive approach towards the issue of debt sustainability is to be welcomed, it is only a first step towards a final solution of the debt crisis which cripples the potential for greater economic, industrial and social development in Africa. It is also questionable whether commitment to structural adjustment programmes should remain the key condition for such debt relief. Many parties, including the European Commission and the World Bank, are questioning the effectiveness of current programmes.

The alliance for Africa's industrialization, initiated by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, and launched in Côte d'Ivoire last month, is yet another important initiative to revitalize African economies. This will provide a mechanism for African leaders to define appropriate industrial development strategies and commit political will and resources to their achievement. It is also an effort to draw the attention of African decision makers and the international community to Africa's industrial development potential and the need to fully realize this potential.

Even though it is important to reaffirm a strong commitment of the private sector, donor Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations to genuine partnership for the accelerated industrial growth of Africa, a critical step must be made to design policies based on the real needs of individual African economies, as development will take place in Africa only when its peoples have democratic control over their own policies. Policies to enhance industrial development and economic growth should also strive to meet the basic needs of communities at the grass-roots level if they are to be socially and environmentally sustainable.

If we need a market rationale to convince us why we should invest in Africa, let me state that assistance to Africa is not welfare. In essence, it is an investment in other people for one's own self-interest. Africa can be, with industrialization, a huge market for the world. The rising economies in Latin America and East Asia have led to world growth. In the same way, a revitalized Africa will enhance prosperity and purchasing power for the world as a whole.

Against the background of the human tragedy in the Great Lakes region, this current session of the General Assembly has considered items such as the eradication of poverty, the plight of refugees, the impact of armed conflict on children, the issue of women and food security. Discussions of all these major issues point directly to the virtual absence of focus and commitment by the international community to the multiplicity of problems in Africa. The marginalization of Africa in all sectors of international life must end.

As President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, I would be without integrity if I came to this occasion to speak about African industrialization without

placing such a goal within the broader context of all the terrible ravages that beset Africa.

I now call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: As in previous years, I am pleased to join in today's celebration of Africa Industrialization Day. Since the General Assembly first proclaimed this special observance seven years ago, the United Nations system has worked hard to raise global awareness and obtain international support for Africa's industrial development.

Education, training, technology, private sector development, access to industrial and commercial information, regional integration: these are among the essential ingredients of industrialization. Together they can be a remedy for the acute economic ills that continue to affect the African continent.

The theme selected by the Conference of African Ministers of Industry for this year's celebration — "mobilization of financial resources for industry" — is both timely and appropriate. It is timely because of the pressing need to mobilize resources for Africa's development, and it is appropriate because the support of the international community remains crucial to economic recovery and development in Africa, particularly for the least developed countries.

Over the years, developing countries have registered remarkable economic progress. The share of developing countries in world industrial production, for instance, has grown from 17 per cent in 1980 to almost 20 per cent in 1995.

But while the economic prospects of many African countries have improved in recent years, Africa's overall industrial performance has continued to lag behind that of other regions in the developing world. Africa's share of global industrial output declined from 0.85 per cent in 1980 to 0.74 per cent in 1995.

This is a cause for great concern, especially when viewed against the backdrop of declining official development assistance, limited private capital flows, creeping debt burdens, widespread poverty, civil strife and political instability.

To address this situation, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has made the mobilization of resources, including domestic and foreign direct investment, a top priority. Maximizing the use of existing resources and mobilizing new and additional resources are also major objectives of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

I am also pleased to note the launch last month in Abidjan, by African Heads of State and Government, of the alliance for Africa's industrialization. This new initiative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), undertaken in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, attaches great importance to the mobilization of resources through partnerships between the public and private sectors at the national, regional and international levels.

But the larger part of the resources needed for Africa's development will come from domestic sources, in keeping with Africa's proclaimed commitment to the principle of self-reliance. For this it will have to encourage private savings, improve the efficiency of tax collection, rationalize public expenditure, raise export earnings and attract foreign direct investments.

The international community should make complementary efforts, in accordance with the principle of full partnership and shared responsibility. It should improve the level, scope and modalities of official development assistance; extend and enlarge trade concessions and preferences to African countries, particularly the least developed countries; take additional and decisive measures to alleviate Africa's external debt burden; encourage and facilitate foreign direct investments; and further coordinate multi-donor assistance in accordance with Africa's development priorities.

In its endeavour to build a brighter future for itself, Africa deserves the continuous support and encouragement of the international community. But while international support is essential, the fate and future of Africa lie, in the final analysis, in Africa's hands. This, I believe, is the message of today's celebration of Africa Industrialization Day.

Agenda item 18 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(h) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/108)

The President: As indicated in document A/51/108, the General Assembly is required, during the fifty-first session, to appoint five persons to fill the vacancies on the Joint Inspection Unit that will arise from the expiration on 31 December 1997, of the terms of office of Mr. Fatih Bouayad-Agha (Algeria), Mr. Homero Luis Hernández Sánchez (Dominican Republic), Mr. Boris Petrovitch Krasulin (Russian Federation), Mr. Francesco Mezzalama (Italy) and Mr. Khalil Issa Othman (Jordan).

As also indicated in document A/51/108, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the President of the General Assembly shall consult with Member States to draw up a list of five countries that will be requested to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

After holding the necessary consultations with the regional groups, I should like to communicate to the Assembly the following information received from the Chairmen of regional groups: for one vacancy from the African States, the Group of African States has endorsed Algeria; for one vacancy from the Asian States, two countries, namely Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, have decided to present their candidatures; for one vacancy from the Eastern European States, the Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the Russian Federation; for one vacancy from the Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has endorsed the Dominican Republic; and for one vacancy from the Western European and other States, the Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed Italy.

As the Group of African States, the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States each have endorsed one candidate for one vacancy, namely Algeria, the Russian Federation, the Dominican Republic and Italy, those four countries will therefore be included in the list of countries to be drawn up, and each respective Government will be requested to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

Since from among the Asian States there are two candidates for one vacancy, in order to complete the drawing up of the list, I should like, in accordance with past practice, to consult with Member States through the procedure of holding an advisory vote by secret ballot to select one country from among the Asian States, would be requested to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

Although this advisory vote would not be an election, we would follow the rules of procedure of the Assembly governing elections.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with existing practice, the country receiving the greatest number of votes and not less than a majority of the votes of those present and voting shall be included in the list of countries to be drawn up.

May I also take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 93 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, when only one person or member is to be elected and no candidate obtains in the first ballot the majority required, a second ballot shall be taken, which shall be restricted to the two candidates obtaining the largest number of votes. If in the second ballot the votes are equally divided, and a majority is required, the President shall decide between the candidates by drawing lots.

I take it that the Assembly also agrees to that procedure.

It was so decided.

The President: Before I request the Secretariat to distribute the ballot papers, I should like to remind members of the Assembly that we are now going to proceed to the selection of one country from among the Asian States, which will be requested to propose a candidate to fill the vacancy on the Joint Inspection Unit.

The Assembly is not, I repeat, not appointing members of the Joint Inspection Unit at this time. It is only selecting one country, which will be requested to propose a candidate. Therefore, only the name of a country and not the name of an individual should appear on the ballot paper.

I should like to repeat the names of the two countries from among the Asian States that decided to present candidates: Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

I should further like to point out that from the Asian States, Japan already has a national serving on the Joint Inspection Unit. The name of that State therefore should not appear on the ballot paper.

The ballot papers will now be distributed.

May I request representatives to use only those ballot papers.

I should further like to request members of the Assembly to write on the ballot paper the name of one State from among the Asian States for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more than one name from among the Asian States will be declared invalid. Any ballots with the name of a State outside the relevant region or with the name of an individual shall not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ivanov (Bulgaria), Ms. Coitir (Ireland) and Mr. Acosta (Paraguay) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Asian States	
Number of ballot papers:	166
Number of invalid ballots:	4
Number of valid ballots:	162
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	162
Required majority:	82
Number of votes obtained:	
Jordan	86
Syrian Arab Republic	76

Jordan, having obtained the required majority, will be included on the list of countries to be drawn up.

The President: I thank members for their advice and assistance. I thank the tellers for their assistance.

In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, Algeria, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Jordan and the Russian Federation will be requested to submit the names of the candidates and their curricula vitae highlighting their relevant qualifications for the tasks ahead. I repeat, highlighting their relevant qualifications for the tasks ahead.

After holding the appropriate consultations described in article 3, paragraph 2 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, I will propose a list of qualified — I repeat, qualified — candidates to the Assembly for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 18.

Agenda item 41

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/512)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.20)

The President: I call on the representative of Nicaragua, who will introduce draft resolution A/51/L.20.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies took place in Managua, Nicaragua, from 4 to 6 July 1994, with the participation of 76 countries, including 25 observer countries. The International Conference was also attended by eminent individuals from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

At that conference the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action were adopted; these address issues of great concern for democratic societies and those in transition, including mutual support among new democracies in dealing with threats to the constitutional process; the peace dividend, which is so needed to bolster democracy and development; combatting corruption, money-laundering and illicit drug trafficking and drug abuse; condemnation of all methods, forms and practices of terrorism; debt problems; governance; and so forth. At the same time, under the Managua Plan of Action it was agreed to set up a *pro tempore* secretariat, responsible to the President of the Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, to promote with support from the Conference Steering Committee and specialized international agencies and various countries of the international community the follow-up and implementation of the Plan of Action until the holding of the Third International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, which is scheduled for 2 to 4 September 1997 in Bucharest, Romania.

The Managua Conference helped to broaden the exchange of experiences begun in Manila, Philippines, in 1988, when the First International Conference was held with the participation of 13 States. The main purpose of the International Conferences has been to reaffirm the far-reaching importance and effectiveness of representative democracy as a system of government. They have addressed in broad and comprehensive terms the issues of transition and governance in new or restored democracies; their successes, weaknesses and prospects; and the challenges and obstacles that they must tackle in the new international environment. The Conferences have heightened the international community's awareness concerning the complexity of these processes, calling for the international community's attention and support in keeping with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter to strengthen the maintenance of international peace and security as well as economic and social development.

The General Assembly has considered the item "Support by the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" since its forty-ninth session. In resolution 49/30, the General Assembly recognized the importance of the Managua Declaration and the Plan of Action, and it requested the Secretary-General to study the ways and mechanisms in which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies. Subsequently, in resolution 50/133, the Secretary-General was encouraged to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member State through coherent, adequate support of their efforts to achieve the goal of democratization. At the same time, Member States were encouraged to promote democratization and to make additional efforts to identify possible steps to support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

The Secretary-General's report contained in document A/51/512, distributed at this fifty-first session, which is the second report by the Secretary-General on this issue, gives a detailed account of the United Nations system's support to the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate democracy. Among other things, a number of examples are given of the assistance provided by the United Nations system for political parties or movements, the mobilization of civil society, electoral assistance, communications media to enable them to act freely and independently, creating a political culture through observance and monitoring of human rights, improved accountability, support for transparency and quality of public sector management, democratic government structures, and strengthening the rule of law. We consider that this United Nations support to these sectors of the life of our country is essential and should be further strengthened.

In the same spirit, we have scrutinized the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/51/555 on the question of strengthening the rule of law, which refers to the Managua Declaration adopted by the Second International Conference as evidence of the importance that the international community attaches to the cooperation of the United Nations system in strengthening the rule of law. It likewise reaffirms the crucial links between democracy, development and human rights. The same document states that the Managua Declaration, viewed together with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, provides an important framework for the improvement of United Nations efforts aimed at the strengthening of the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the countries in transition. We believe that the transition to democracy is, without question, an irreversible part of the new international order, and that this Organization should therefore collaborate in this process which is so vital for attaining world peace.

In today's world, as stated by my Foreign Minister at the informal ministerial meeting of new or restored democracies that took place on 30 September here in New

York, conflict and violence, ethnic struggles and religious intolerance, terrorism, drug trafficking, corruption, poverty and underdevelopment persist, along with the heavy burden of external debt -- factors that continue to overwhelm many of our countries. The acute shortage of resources and the degradation of the environment also persist, all of this undermining world peace and security and ultimately militating against the difficult process of global transition to democracy.

For this reason, consolidating new or restored democracies requires concerted and continuing action, both within our countries and externally, through complementary and sustained cooperation which will make it possible to consolidate peace and democracy, thereby promoting those countries' possibilities of economic and social development.

With this commitment to renewing and strengthening new or restored democracies in mind, the holding of the Third International Conference of New and Restored Democracies in Bucharest, Romania, will be a fitting opportunity once again to reaffirm our adherence to these principles. It will also offer the chance to make creative and innovative contributions based on the experience of recent years, which will undoubtedly help to perfect democracy in our countries and to bolster development plans. Democracy should be regarded as a dynamic, evolving process — a process of constant improvement.

As members of a globalized and interdependent world, the new or restored democracies must look to the future enthusiastically and consider new challenges and opportunities they face in order to continue to strengthen and consolidate their processes and interests. This is why we look forward enthusiastically to the holding of the third International Conference in Bucharest next year.

One of the challenges we face is to continue united and to preserve our links as a group of nations in transition, sharing, without distinction as to culture or region, in the complexity of the democratization process, with a common vision and a realistic plan of action for all — a plan that will encompass our aspirations and serve as a frame of reference for our initiatives to strengthen peace and development.

The international community cannot turn its back on the great efforts our countries are making to consolidate their democratic achievements, while at the same time making headway in their economic and social development despite having to tackle the aftermath of war, poverty, external debt and other crushing problems that still persist in the new international society, chiefly in the developing world.

For this reason, our group of countries, which represents more than half the United Nations membership, is once again presenting a draft resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", which has been distributed as document A/51/L.20. This draft resolution is similar in content to that adopted last year by this Assembly. However, it has been updated in the light of recent developments concerning this issue.

In conclusion, Nicaragua, in its capacity as current secretariat and on behalf of all the sponsors — which a number of other countries have joined — trusts that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus by this General Assembly at the appropriate time.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): The General Assembly is again discussing the issue of ways of developing and consolidating new or restored democracies. Ukraine, as one of the initiators of the inclusion of this item in the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, welcomes such a dialogue. We consider it to be very important and acute as never before.

It is irrefutable that, during the present conditions of challenges and upheavals, societies based on democratic principles constitute a reliable foundation capable not only of responding adequately to the challenges of our time but also of lending support to others. Therefore, we firmly believe that the more States pursue the path of democratic development, and the more confidently they undergo democratic transformation in their societies, the sooner humankind will achieve stability and prosperity. It is hardly accidental that the people of the world are beginning to understand that democracy qualifies as a key element of development and advancement towards a better future.

Consequently, the difficulties faced by States embarking on the road towards democracy cannot be considered exclusively as their domestic problems. Obviously, success in building a democratic society depends, first and foremost, on actions undertaken at the national level and on the commitment and ability of peoples and their Governments to follow the path of democratic transformation. However, much also depends on actions undertaken at the international level, where the

central role, in our view, should be assigned to the United Nations.

History has not yet created precedents in which States with deep-rooted democratic traditions threaten international peace and security. As the saying goes, democracies do not start wars. Moreover, such States make the most valuable contribution to the solution of global economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. Ukraine is therefore one of the countries that strongly advocate the enhancement of the role of the United Nations in establishing and consolidating democratic standards in public and social life.

In this connection, our delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report pursuant to resolution 50/133, and endorses the proposed forms of possible support by the United Nations system of the efforts by Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies.

Since decolonization, this has become yet another important challenge to the Member States of this world Organization and a new test of the purposes and principles of its Charter, specifically Article 2, paragraph 4, which says that:

> "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

In this context, our delegation would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the proposal made by the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, at the special commemorative meeting on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, with regard to establishing a United Nations trusteeship over the process of the formation of new independent States.

Such a mechanism would be streamlined primarily to prevent the use of force against young democracies and to support democratic trends through respect for generally recognized rules and principles of international law. In addition, such a mechanism would make it possible for the Organization to contribute a great deal to the transition of newly emerged countries towards democracy and to make them realize all the benefits to be gained by building a society on democratic principles. In our opinion, the United Nations has at its disposal the necessary machinery that can and should be engaged when there is a threat to the development and strengthening of new or restored democracies.

Ukraine welcomes the offer of the Romanian Government to host the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Bucharest in 1997 and plans to take active part in this forum. We hope that, by the time of the Conference, our country will have something new to report about our own achievements in establishing and promoting basic democratic principles in our society. We have already made good progress in this field and now, before this General Assembly, we can clearly state that the democratic process in Ukraine is under way and has become irreversible. This is one of the major gains of the five years of Ukraine's independence.

Almost five years ago, on 1 December 1991, in a national referendum, the people of Ukraine confirmed its sovereign will and determination to build its own independent State with a predictable domestic and foreign policy to integrate our nation into the European family of free democracies. Among the significant accomplishments of this period was the adoption, on 28 June this year, of the Constitution, which set forth the guidelines for building a consolidated democratic Ukrainian State and gave an important impetus to promoting further democratic values in our pluralistic and multinational society. In this endeavour, Ukraine will continue to count on the support of the United Nations and of the world community as a whole.

We are deeply convinced that our domestic successes cannot be separated from other efforts aimed at promoting and strengthening the principles of democracy throughout the world.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*interpretation from French*): The Principality of Andorra welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

Indeed, for a State like ours, which over the centuries has been spared non-democratic interludes, but which, because of its geographic situation, has nonetheless been in a position to appreciate the dangers that threaten democracy and, in the course of many conflicts, has welcomed refugees fleeing authoritarian regimes. For a State like ours, the question of consolidating democracy is very close to our hearts.

We also have some experience in restoring the balance of democracy. In the 1970s, we began a process of reform of institutions, which accelerated in the late 1980s, leading to the new Constitution of 1993. We are

therefore very familiar with the complexities involved in any constitutional reform and all the delicate processes leading to a new formula for political life, and we are in solidarity with those who are involved in this.

(spoke in Spanish)

The United Nations can and must play a special role in assisting the consolidation of democracy. Electoral assistance is one of the means at its disposal, and is one of the areas in which we have seen evidence of cooperation between the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other organizations.

Similarly, the important legal work of the United Nations, which is often overlooked but to which we pay tribute today, contributes to the consolidation of the state and rule of law in many countries. As a small State, Andorra is following very closely all initiatives aimed at advancing the rule of law throughout the world.

These and other elements mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report help us to consolidate what is called political democracy. In his book *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, Juan Linz writes:

(spoke in English)

> "Let us be clear that political democracy does not necessarily assure even a reasonable approximation of what we could call a democratic society, a society with considerable equality of opportunity in all spheres, including social equality as well as opportunity to formulate political alternatives and mobilize the electorate for them." *(Linz, Juan, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1978)*

(spoke in Spanish)

A democratic society can only be formed by citizens through their constancy and their values. The United Nations must also contribute to this process, promoting education in human rights and democratic values, especially for the children and young people who will make up civil society of the twenty-first century.

Andorra is working actively in this direction and will address this issue at greater length next week at the World Youth Forum in Vienna.

Mr. Castelli (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation has particular satisfaction in speaking on agenda item 41, "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies," that is, the support this Organization provides to those striving to strengthen or consolidate their democratic systems of government.

As our Presidents have repeatedly stated at successive Latin American summit meetings and in other regional forums, we reaffirm that democracy and respect for human rights and for the fundamental human freedoms are essential values for our countries. Those values are the three central pillars of the modern State, making it possible to establish the link between democracy and development and to form the requisite framework for improving the well-being and stability of our societies.

As my country noted at the last meeting on this subject in September, Latin America and the Caribbean quickly understood that in the last few years of this century democratic systems of government must be consolidated conclusively. For decades, our region suffered under totalitarian regimes that denied citizens the participation necessary to correct abuses and root out corruption or arbitrary use of power by replacing leaders who had lost the confidence of the people. In this, we are in step with the great movement towards freedom that was exemplified in such a historic and moving way by the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

In the same spirit, the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) has been modified to make authoritarianism even more incompatible with membership, and human rights conventions became international legislation in most countries. Thus, in the context of this new global scenario an increasingly large number of countries adopted and recognized democracy as the best system of government, thereby strengthening regional and international peace and security.

In this process of democratic consolidation an important role has been played by political parties and movements as well as by non-governmental organizations. As an example of the activities of non-governmental organizations we can cite the case of Guatemala, where United Nations support for the participation of civil society has actively contributed to governance in the process of Central American peace and democratization.

In addition to those examples, we see the United Nations system participating not only in conflict settlement but in assistance for confidence-building measures that can consolidate post-conflict situations. We also recall the presence of electoral observers, whose important work in election organization and verification has helped to foster respect for freedom and human rights, making the wishes expressed by the majority of the population irreversible.

We reaffirm our conviction that it is the democratic system that enables the expression of the popular will to be properly channelled, producing leaders unswervingly committed to carrying out the mandate entrusted to them. We believe that the framework of democracy and freedom thus established produces a wealth of initiatives and opportunities that derive from political and economic freedom. This is not some unrealistic dream. We can state pragmatically that oppression and authoritarianism ultimately destroy the very regimes that sustain them.

The modern formula for development is based on these freedoms, but it is also based on the responsibilities of the State to society, as the guarantor of individual freedoms and of the strengthening of the system itself.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement in his report on this point, where he notes that the democratization process has coincided with expectations that Governments will be more responsive to the demands of citizens and conduct their business in a more transparent manner. The growing demand for fairer forms of administration, free from any kind of corruption, is today an absolute requirement for those mandated to administer the public sector.

For those reasons, countries that enjoy democracy today have an obligation to foster and promote it among those to whom it is still lacking and to reaffirm their total support for the consolidation of the transition processes.

For these reasons, my country has actively participated in the processes of democratization in Central America and the Caribbean, lending technical, economic and financial assistance and participating as electoral observers and in peacekeeping operations whenever called upon to do so. Similarly, we took part in the Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies at Managua, and we will be present at the next Conference, to be held in Romania.

In conclusion, we wish to stress the responsibility incumbent on the United Nations, in accordance with its Charter, to help to strengthen new democracies and prevent a return to anachronistic systems of oppression. Thus, we must promote the efforts towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation being made by the private sector, the United Nations system and regional and non-governmental organizations to consolidate all these changes.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries — Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — have aligned themselves with this statement. Iceland and Liechtenstein have also aligned themselves with the statement.

The 1990s has been the decade of democratization. Around the world, regimes based on racism, dictatorship and oppression have been replaced by systems of government where the will of the people is decisive. Today, in only a handful of countries are citizens denied the right to govern themselves, and the process of democratization begun two decades ago allows us to look forward to a time when all Member States of the Organization will be governed by democratic means.

Democratic government takes many forms. There is no single model of democratic governance. Every democracy, being rooted in the individual conditions of its own society, adopts slightly different forms. But every democracy, be it federal or unitary, presidential or parliamentary in form, respects certain key requirements. Periodic and genuinely free elections are essential to a democratic system, but are not sufficient in themselves. Citizens must also enjoy freedom of association and the right to form political parties. The first requirement of democratic governance is the accountability of Government to the citizen, the ability of the citizen to recall the Government and the possibility for all citizens to participate fully in the taking of decisions that affect their lives. It requires an effective separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches of Government and the judiciary. That judiciary must be independent in its functioning. It also requires the full respect of all human rights, and measures to ensure that the rights of those belonging to ethnic, religious, or political minorities are fully respected. In this context, the rights of freedom of expression and opinion, as well as full access to independent information, assume particular importance.

To ensure that the views of citizens are adequately reflected between elections, democratic Governments also recognize and accept a wide variety of dynamic measures to enable the citizens to participate more fully in government and to retain control of their own destiny. These include the possibility for individuals to communicate frequently with their parliamentary representatives. But they also include the ability for non-governmental organizations to make their views known and to try to change the views of these representatives and other decision makers.

The Secretary-General, in his report of 18 October 1996, provides both an extensive analysis of the issues involved in the support of new or restored democracies, and a detailed account of the activities undertaken within the United Nations system to promote and consolidate this democratization process. The report rightly points out that these activities cannot be compartmentalized. Rather, they should be, and they are, incorporated into the wider efforts of the United Nations to promote sustainable human development, including through the establishment of effective, free and transparent systems of governance. They are also integrated into United Nations actions in the fields of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

The European Union supports and underlines the importance of the many efforts being undertaken within the United Nations system, including the Electoral Assistance Division, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, in support of democratization. We particularly wish to commend the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in relation to democratization. Since his appointment, he has undertaken measures to ensure that the human rights programme adopts a positive and action-oriented approach to human rights, democracy and development. This includes the opening of field offices in a number of countries and ensuring that technical cooperation is provided, as a matter of priority, to countries that are beginning the transition to democracy.

It is extremely important to enhance the coordination of the various activities in support of democratization being undertaken by different United Nations bodies. We note that the Administrative Committee on Coordination's Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development has established a subgroup on capacity-building for governance. We consider this an important development, and urge that the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be able to participate fully in its work.

The European Union and its member States are actively engaged in promoting democratization and the transition towards permanently responsive systems of government. This engagement takes numerous forms. The Union and its member States have frequently participated in observing electoral processes. The Union's development cooperation policy emphasizes positive action in the promotion of human rights and democracy. We are implementing a number of projects in support of the rule of law, the transition to democracy and the strengthening of non-governmental organizations and other institutions promoting a pluralist society. The corollary of this positive action is that serious and persistent violations of human rights or interruptions in democratization call for appropriate reaction, including, in certain cases, the suspension of cooperation agreements between the Union and the countries concerned.

To conclude, we actively and strongly support the activities being undertaken by the Secretary-General and other members of the United Nations system to promote the process of democratization around the world.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): One decade ago, the Filipino people sought to renew their commitment to democracy in what was to be known as the "People's Power Revolution", which demonstrated the triumph of the popular will in a non-violent yet forceful manner. This historic event also revealed the universal character of democracy, as people's power spread to Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa.

The Philippines took the initiative to unite countries and peoples which had experienced democratic renewal into a movement which was to be called the "Newly Restored Democracies". The movement developed into what is now called the "New and Restored Democracies", to reflect the broader spectrum of the democratic experience among nations.

The movement's First International Conference of Newly Restored Democracies (ICRND) was held in Manila in 1988. The Conference's Manila Declaration affirmed a commitment to democracy which encompasses the exercise of personal freedom as well as the enjoyment of national sovereignty and development, emphasized the fact that mutual support among new democracies could overcome all internal and external threats, and called for solidarity with older democracies.

Our brother nation across the Pacific, Nicaragua, whose history parallels our own, hosted the next meeting

in 1992. The Managua Declaration reaffirmed the indissoluble link between peace, democracy and development, and promulgated a plan of action to consolidate and expand the gains of new democracy on a global level. The transcontinental nature of the movement is reflected in the election of the next host of the movement, Romania, which will hold the third ICNRD next year in Bucharest. In preparation for the next conference, an informal ministerial meeting of the ICNRD, in which the Foreign Ministers of the Philippines, Nicaragua and Romania and other ministers participated, was held in New York last September.

While democracy has deep universal roots in the collective psyche of mankind, its blossoming needs careful nurturing in the same way as a delicate flower. Democracy, for it to flourish, needs the support of the international community, through the United Nations. The movement is grateful to the United Nations community, particularly to the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General, for their clear manifestations of support. We warmly received last year's General Assembly resolution 50/133, which welcomed the first report of the Secretary-General on ways and means by which the United Nations could support new and restored democracies. We are deeply appreciative of this year's report by the Secretary-General, which details the assistance rendered to Governments. Such assistance was rendered in two areas: promotion of democratic culture, and improvement of the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the requests of Governments to promote new or restored democracies. This report will provide an invaluable input for the ICNRD.

We ask the General Assembly once again to approve the report and adopt the draft resolution reaffirming the United Nations support to new and restored democracies by consensus. This item should also be included in the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The universal spirit of democracy is a vital and growing one in the world today, a spirit which guides and sustains the direction of the United Nations.

Mr. Whannou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Benin is eagerly taking part in the discussion of the agenda item that gathered us all here today entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The Government of Benin takes the view that all States, whatever their political system, economic level or cultural characteristics, are duty-bound to promote, protect and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the keystone of the edifice of democracy. In this respect, Benin reaffirms its deep commitment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms whose promotion and protection are a legitimate concern of the international community.

In this vein, Benin has continued to make progress in consolidating our democratic experiment which began at the historic National Conference of Active Forces of the Nation in February 1990. I know that the entire Assembly has attentively watched the profound qualitative changes in Benin's political life and it would be remiss of me if I failed today to take this welcome opportunity to thank the Assembly for the special interest with which it has followed our major political event; the recent presidential election, held in March 1996, which in a peaceful and orderly fashion, without violence and without bloodshed, led to a democratic change of Government, in perfect conformity with the Constitution that has been in force in the country since December 1990. The Assembly will agree with me that the generally proper and legitimate election, the peaceful behaviour of the vast majority of the national political class, the courageous and responsible attitude of the people of Benin and the unwavering rigour of the Constitutional Court are telling signs of genuine political maturity and an irreversible commitment to building a truly democratic society in the Republic of Benin.

In order to carry out its programme to build a State based on the rule of law and a prosperous nation in which all citizens of Benin will enjoy basic necessities, the Government of Benin would like greater support and assistance from the entire international community. We know that simply meeting the requirements of the ritual of electoral polls will not be enough to establish and guarantee lasting democracy in a country.

Democracy can only be consolidated through harmonious, smooth, sustainable economic development. Nor can it be strengthened without lasting peace. This means that there is an intrinsic link between democracy, development and peace. On the basis of the results of the Managua International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, we must lay the foundations of genuine partnership among our various countries that have committed themselves to this arduous but noble undertaking. We must prevent this experiment from becoming a regrettable venture.

Democracy is not and cannot be an end in itself. It must not just resolve the key problems of society, it

should also promote the full development of the individual by being firmly rooted in economic and social development and social justice, and enjoy the necessary participation of all citizens in the life of society. We need to close ranks to meet the major challenges that can face democracy, such as poverty and all it entails, the spectre of ethnic conflict, illicit drug trafficking, international terrorism, religious fanaticism, the spread of the AIDS pandemic, the ravages of malaria, and so forth.

Our peoples cannot wait for development. This is why the Managua Plan of Action must be put into effect with the generous assistance of the established and wealthier democracies and the United Nations system. The countries that I venture to call the established and wealthier democracies are duty-bound to display some degree of political resolve in order to ensure once and for all the survival of democracy in countries that have just restored or won back democracy. They must therefore pay special attention not only to the Plan of Action we prepared at the Managua Conference but also to national programmes and projects that our Governments will be presenting to them in the context of development or economic recovery. Only respect for the commitments enshrined in the various international consensus instruments will help strengthen the democratic process in the countries that have embarked on this path.

We can also rely on the willingness of the United Nations system which has already made a great contribution to the establishment of democracy in more than one country and which can still do a great deal to strengthen new or restored democracies by providing increased assistance in all fields of activity.

If democracy is to have real meaning and realize its full liberating and redeeming potential, it must be present at both the national and the global levels. This means that democracy should also underpin and guide the organization and conduct of international relations. The world, long split by the East-West confrontation, and today marked by imbalances between North and South, can and must now devise and give effect to new democratic relations among States in the interest of peace and prosperity around the world.

The delegation of Benin welcomes the strengthening of democracy around the world, and hopes that the Assembly's adoption of draft resolution A/51/L.20, introduced by the Ambassador of Nicaragua on behalf of a number of countries, including my own, will be one more milestone towards support of the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies.

Mr. Wensley (South Africa): The agenda item before us today is one to which my delegation attaches particular importance. South Africa is a young democracy which received electoral assistance from the United Nations in the form of a verification mission in 1994. My delegation therefore sees the role of the United Nations in promoting the means for citizens throughout the world to participate freely and democratically in the decision-making processes in their societies as critical.

The role of the United Nations in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building often overshadows its role as an Organization which promotes human development and helps Member States to provide more equitable and effective governance to their peoples and strengthen civil society. My delegation therefore agrees with the central idea as contained in An Agenda for Development that improving and enhancing good governance is an essential condition for the success of any strategy for development.

In this context, my delegation further welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/512), which notes the importance of promoting a democratic culture and improving the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to requests of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. We also note that a fundamental element of the present report is the need for the United Nations system to integrate civil society into its efforts to consolidate democratic development.

South Africa's recent experience since its first truly democratic elections just over two years ago has indicated that the benefits of a vibrant democracy -- at both the national and the local levels — with the full participation of all political parties, movements and civil society has again proven the value of the necessity for all Member States to strive for and promote a political culture of full participation and consultation in the affairs of state.

The dark days of racial domination, tyranny and authoritarianism have indeed been relegated to the dustbin of history in my country and South Africa is committed to contributing actively to the promotion of the ideals of democracy in other parts of the world.

The United Nations system also plays a key role in the fields of institution-building and governance. In the

fields of accountability and efficient public sector management, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank play a leading role. In South Africa, the latter organization has been providing advice in areas such as budgeting and decentralization.

Due to our own painful past experiences, my delegation also commends the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information in encouraging the development of a free and responsible press as an essential element for effective democratization through its series of regional seminars, organized in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and supported by UNDP, on promoting pluralistic and independent media.

My delegation also recognizes the importance, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General, of the establishment of efficient legal institutions for the rule of law to prevail and for democracy to become a reality. In this context, South Africa's independent Constitutional Court ensures that central Government actions and those of local Government bodies are in line with our Bill of Human Rights.

My delegation further welcomes with satisfaction the initiative which the Administrative Committee on Coordination has taken in the area of institution-building and governance. In this regard, we commend the establishment within the Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development of a subgroup on capacity-building for governance chaired by UNDP, as well as efforts aimed at the improvement of UNDP's internal capacity to respond effectively to requests to support the strengthening of democratization.

In recognition of the role of civil society, together with good governance, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has broadened its work programme in enhancing trade and investment opportunities to include the role of civil society in development. In this regard, the ninth session of UNCTAD, held in South Africa, reaffirmed the importance of involving non-governmental actors in the activities of the Organization.

We fully recognize that civil society has a distinct role to play in the pursuit of the objective of sustainable development through accountable governance and administration. However, civil society alone does not have at its disposal the means to ensure this. My delegation therefore wishes to register its concern at the observation by the Secretary-General that the Organization's capacity to respond to the requests of Member States to consolidate and promote new and restored democracies may often be limited by the lack of adequate funding.

My delegation calls upon Member States to recognize their responsibilities in order to enable the Organization to fulfil its role in assisting other Member States to help promote and consolidate democratic cultures and societies.

In conclusion, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution before us (A/51/L.20) and expresses the hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): When addressing the General Assembly early last month, the Prime Minister of Mongolia underlined that:

> "Today no country can afford to stay aloof from the tremendous transformations that are going on. In Mongolia, this year ushered in a new era. As a result of general elections held last summer, State power has been peacefully transferred to democratic political forces for the first time in 75 years. This marks the logical culmination of the 1990 democratic revolution and lays a solid foundation for stable democratic development. It is also a result of the simultaneous pursuit of both political and economic reforms." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 16th meeting, p. 11*)

Mongolia's choice for democratic development is natural. Democracy, as is stated in the Managua Declaration — which was adopted at the Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, held from 4 to 6 July 1994 — guarantees the sovereignty of peoples and the existence of the rule of law, as well as the full exercise, respect for and protection of human rights and social practices aimed at the peaceful search for human development. My Government considers it the best way to achieve human, social, political and economic development on the basis of human values and rights.

Our choice is also in conformity with the growing trend towards democracy and political pluralism worldwide, as well as with the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As is known, Mongolia embarked upon a comprehensive political and economic reform in 1990. This process constitutes the essence of the newly-formed Government's detailed reform agenda, which covers the period up to the year 2000. It emphasizes the need to consolidate democratic gains and to deepen and accelerate the fundamental restructuring of our economy on the basis of market principles and private sector development.

The reform agenda takes into account the level of political reform achieved and places particular emphasis on economic reform, some of the major tasks of which are to expand and accelerate the privatization process, to restructure the public sector and commercial banks, to establish a financially sound energy sector and so on.

In undertaking these steps, the Government is well aware that some of the measures to revive the country's economy — by liberating the prices of electricity, heating and gasoline and by restructuring the banking and financial sectors — would inevitably affect the well-being of the population at large, leading, perhaps, to disenchantment and even discontent, as the experience of some other countries in transition clearly demonstrates.

Therefore, in this initial period of democratic reform, international support and assurances are of crucial importance in alleviating or offsetting the negative economic and social consequences which economic reform and structural adjustment programmes usually entail. If the social cost of adjustment is not minimized, the reform process will run the risk of being derailed.

The international community should therefore lend, as before, moral and methodological support, as well as economic, financial and other assistance which would allow the Governments of new or restored democracies to proceed with bold steps to create a thriving market economy and a democratic system and to alleviate the social costs sustained in the process.

The Mongolian Government's reform programme attaches vital importance to improving and enhancing governance, which is essential for its democratic development. This objective is to be achieved through Mongolia's Management Development Programme, which is a comprehensive effort designed to enhance both public and private sector management capacities.

Another aspect of the reform process that I would like to touch upon briefly is the importance of creating the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of human rights and the role of non-governmental organizations.

It goes without saying that Mongolia is deeply committed to protecting and promoting human rights. It is a party to most of the major international human rights instruments. The incorporation of international human rights standards into national laws and policies and the building or strengthening of national institutions capable of protecting and promoting human rights and democracy under the rule of law are an inseparable, essential part of the democratic reform process and hence should be supported.

Non-governmental organizations are a major factor in the democratization and development efforts. Of crucial importance is their mobilization in support of the provision of essential social and other services in a manner complementary to the efforts of Governments. Today, a considerable share of development assistance is channelled directly through non-governmental organizations. My Government welcomes this trend, as it can promote a counterbalance to unnecessary Government interference and supports the growth of a civil society.

Like many other developing countries undergoing fundamental changes, Mongolia is faced with a host of problems. A low level of development, poverty, unemployment, the external debt burden and an underdeveloped national economic structure vulnerable to fluctuations of the world market are some of the major ones. Despite these hardships, the Government of Mongolia is determined to undertake decisive measures to speed up the reform process.

The Government and people of Mongolia consider the country's democratic development to be an inseparable part of the ongoing overall world democratic process. We are gratified to note that a growing number of countries are, like Mongolia, embracing democratic principles and values.

Being familiar with the problems and difficulties of bold undertakings, we heartily welcome bilateral and multilateral assistance in support of reforms in countries with new or restored democracies. The consolidation of democratic processes is not only important for strengthening peace and international security; but is also in the best interests of achieving the objectives and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It is therefore important for the United Nations to support the efforts of the Governments of the new or restored

democracies. My delegation believes that United Nations capacities in that direction are far from exhausted.

Moreover, my delegation believes in the capacity of the world community to find fresh, innovative ways and means to support new or restored democracies. One major approach could be the use of the benefits that the reduction of arms production and sales would generate. It is also important to broaden the dialogue between the older democracies and the new or restored ones in order to strengthen and consolidate democracy and promote development, taking into account the specificity, complexity and cohesion of the reform processes and the different roles of international, regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the promotion of democratic principles.

I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive report presented to the General Assembly on the support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies, as contained in document A/51/512. My delegation notes with interest and appreciation the sections covering the assistance which the United Nations system is providing in institution-building, particularly in the areas of creating and strengthening democratic structures of government, enhancing the rule of law and improving accountability, transparency and quality in public sector management. We find the information and conclusions therein useful and valuable for our own bold undertakings.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that my delegation looks forward to the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Bucharest in September 1997. We believe that it will provide us with an opportunity to objectively evaluate the results of the implementation of the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action and will give further impulse to the attainment of its objectives.

Bearing all this in mind, my delegation has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/51/L.20.

Mr. Popescu (Romania): Romania subscribes to the statement delivered by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union and its associated States and shares the views expressed therein. I would like to add some comments of particular interest to my delegation.

Romania is pleased to see the item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies" discussed for the third consecutive session and enjoying increasing interest.

In this respect, we welcome the second report of the Secretary-General, which describes in a comprehensive manner the activities of the United Nations aimed at promoting a democratic culture and at improving the capacity of the Organization to meet the needs of Governments in this field. We also appreciate the report's conceptual approach, as reflected in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6. It is clear, accurate and cautious and defines ideas we can all embrace.

The report acknowledges that an active role of the United Nations, based on its authority and prestige, fully responds to the spirit and objectives of the Charter. We do believe that, indeed, the United Nations can play a significant part in supporting democratization as a catalyst of domestic, economic and social development and of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Along the same lines, the report of the Secretary General on the work of the Organization recognizes in its conclusion that democratization, peace and development are the main dimensions by which the impact of the United Nations on the global society is to be measured.

The world Organization can and should build upon a new and realistic vision of democratization. That vision should consecrate the perennial moral and pragmatic values of democracy, which are of universal relevance. At the same time, it should encompass the exceptional political, cultural, demographic and religious diversity of the nations of the world.

There is no need of a more exact and richer reference to the concept of democracy in the United Nations Charter than that which inspired its opening: "We the peoples..." After centuries of turbulent human history, we do not know a form of government that better responds to the aspirations and the needs of the peoples of all continents. Democracy is a system of values pregnant with realistic promises and seizable opportunities. The building of democratic societies and institutions is one of the most efficient conflict-prevention measures that can be taken, in terms both of political and participatory structures and of human mentality and behaviour.

For countries that, after decades of totalitarianism, are again enjoying the benefits of exercising all basic

freedoms, democracy is the promise of prosperity and the full affirmation of the individual values and national potential. The international community must encourage and support the translation of these aspirations into reality.

For countries and regions affected by conflicts, democracy is a promise of peace, stability and normality. Measures aimed at democratization should be seen as part of any post-conflict peace-building effort the United Nations might embark upon.

As underlined in the report of the Secretary-General, the forms taken by democracies depend on the characteristics and circumstances of cultures and societies, which exclude generally applicable definitions and patterns. Indeed, democratic principles cannot deny the immense variability of human experience and human attributes. They are essentially based on the equality of human beings. However, access to decision-making, equality before the law with true access in practice to judicial and other mechanisms, equality of opportunity, equal access to mass media and freedom to organize and express views without hindrance form a core of essential democratic values.

Yet any democracy needs a systematic, fair process for implementing the freely expressed wish of the governed. Free and fair elections are only a crucial starting point. Another component of democratic society is the development of strong civic organizations. If we acknowledge the splendid diversity of countries and cultures all over the world, we should also acknowledge the no less magnificent distinctions among groups and individuals. In chapter II of the report, a proper emphasis is placed on the role of the United Nations in strengthening civil society. Indeed, civil society builds democracy by allowing permanent change and the evolution of values through non-violent conflict. Groups compete with each other and with the State for power and the consent of society to carry out specific agendas. Civil society increases the effectiveness of coalitions of individuals for innovative activities, and, within the context of institutionalized competition, tolerance and acceptance of opposition can develop on a permanent basis.

Democracy also means pluralism. Pluralism fosters the dynamic interplay of ideas, enterprises, actors and a great variety of non-governmental groups on the basis of mutual respect and sensitivity to fundamental human rights. Are these values and principles at variance with the purposes of the United Nations? Nobody could say so. The United Nations can help to create an atmosphere in which democratic ideas are meaningful and worth striving for. Some of these values have already been taken on board: awareness of mechanisms for non-violent conflict resolution; policies and mechanisms that protect basic human rights; tolerance of diversity, including religious and ethnic differences; and legitimate and fair representation.

In the chapter on observations and recommendations, the report of the Secretary-General indicates the need for the United Nations system to integrate civil society into its efforts to consolidate democratic developments. The possibilities of cooperation and dialogue are unlimited. I should like to provide just two relevant examples from the region that I come from.

The programme on democracy, governance and participation, initiated and developed by the United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services, represents a praiseworthy attempt to take a multifaceted approach to the complex democratic and societal transformations pursued by the countries in Central Europe, the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The emphasis of democracy, governance and participation projects on the development of democratic systems, sound and good governance and citizen's participation in State affairs demonstrates an important potential for a genuine partnership between United Nations institutions, countries hosting projects, and donors.

The activities included in the democracy, governance and participation programme constitute an evolving, adapting and updating process, which is obviously not perfect, but is already productive and very promising. The United Nations Development Programme and its Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS deserve our full appreciation for their pioneering work.

Another initiative — outside the United Nations context — was a seminar entitled "Democratization: Interaction of Social, Economic and Political Determinants in Promoting and Consolidating New or Restored Democracies in the CIS Countries and Eastern Europe". It was intended as a follow-up meeting of the first report of the Secretary-General on new or restored democracies. The meeting took place in Finland in December 1995 and was organized by a Finnish research centre. It provided valuable insights into the problems that new democracies are dealing with. Leading experts from academic circles and non-governmental organizations offered precisely the kind of interconnection and collaboration that the United Nations is currently seeking.

Such meetings, wherever they take place, are useful to all United Nations Member States. They can only demonstrate that the United Nations, in debating and undertaking measures in support of democratization processes, is taking a necessary and rewarding course of action.

The Government of Romania is honoured to be the future host of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, due to take place from 2 to 4 September 1997. My country has recovered its democratic traditions after 45 years of totalitarianism and, in December 1989, expressed its irreversible option in favour of democratic values, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Romania wants to bring its own contribution to the continuation and deepening of the international dialogue aimed at making democracy a main factor for the overall progress of nations and the positive development of international relations.

We are encouraged by the interest expressed by the Member States that participated in the Informal Ministerial Meeting on New or Restored Democracies, held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 September 1996, to cooperate with the Romanian Government in preparing the Third International Conference. We are grateful to the delegation of Nicaragua for having organized the Ministerial Meeting and for the manner in which it fulfils its function of *pro tempore* secretariat of the Conference.

In its desire to make the 1997 Conference a success, Romania is relying on the sympathy and support of interested Member States. As suggested in document A/51/512, the report of the Secretary-General will indeed be of use during deliberations at the Bucharest Conference. We hope that the results of next year's Conference will also benefit the Organization and bring fresh ideas to ways of acting in dealing with this important challenge for the United Nations.

It is our hope that the draft resolution on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The process of restoring and establishing new democracies has become global. It is now a solid international reality. Regrettably and all too frequently, its main attributes are structural crisis, stagnation of production, a serious lack of capital investments, galloping inflation, general deregulation of the economy, increasingly widespread unemployment and, as an inevitable result, increased social contradictions. I should point out that the attempts of these Governments to stabilize the situation on their own too often fail to be adequately and clearly understood in society, where a well-adapted system of social safeguards is lacking. The situation is exacerbated by the disappointing results experienced by several countries in converting military production and in arms reduction when compliance with international commitments becomes a factor in diverting already meagre resources and funds from the urgent needs of economic development.

At the two previous sessions of the General Assembly, we pointed out that the lack of visible signs of understanding and tangible measures on the part of the developed nations in assisting the new and restored democracies could be interpreted as an unfavourable external factor and have serious consequences for both national harmony and regional stability.

This problem has squarely confronted the countries with transitional economies, in which, in a number of instances, the process of transition has been a painful one indeed. It has threatened to topple the basic pillars of society, challenge generally accepted values, disrupt economic life, and increase domestic problems. As a consequence, the reserve of social stability in these societies has been depleted. Where prevention efforts lag, crisis phenomena begin to threaten both the countries themselves and others in their regions. Urgent measures, agreed upon at a high level, are required.

These and other factors show that essentially, new democracies all have faced the same tasks. Among the critical ones are ensuring the peaceful nature of political reforms; establishing and consolidating domestic democratic institutions and standards; restructuring; and ensuring a social orientation that promotes economic transformation and is consolidated by a system of measures and safeguards to preserve social justice and protect society.

The success of the process of reform and the establishment of a healthy, viable national economy clearly depend primarily on the countries directly affected. But this success also has an external component, since it is contingent on the effective support of the leading industrially developed nations, developing countries and other countries with transitional economies. Therefore, a global dependency exists, because the failure of national economies to reform would inevitably entail not only the collapse of democratic institutions but also, in a broader sense, the collapse of democratic ideals

themselves. In other words, the sustainable development of new and transitional democracies — and these represent more than half of the international community — is the key to the sustainability and harmonization of the entire international community on the eve of the third millennium. It is clear, therefore, why there is such a high degree of interest in the new and restored democracies, in their adaptation to international realities, and in the creation of mechanisms that would enhance their integration into existing and emerging international structures.

The new and restored democracies are making their contribution to addressing the needs related to this adaptation by drawing upon the principles of international cooperation already enshrined in a number of declarations and in other strategies and plans of action that are being developed. These include the Manila Declaration and the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action, which was adopted at the Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. These documents underscore the need to work out new criteria and forms of interaction among the international community and the new and restored democracies. Areas to be addressed include: easing the debt burden, settling external indebtedness, instituting mechanisms to stimulate investment, providing differential credits, ease the trade protectionism of the industrially developed nations, overcoming the shortfall of investments in development, eliminating poverty, and addressing the costs of restructuring for the needy segments of the population. Of particular interest here for the new democracies in the countries with transitional economies are the liberalization of international trade, the broadening of their export capabilities, the granting to them of most-favoured-nation trade status, increased investment flows and financial support for economic programmes. Such initiatives should take into account the specifics of each country.

In other words, there is a need to offset the losses that, for the new or restored democracies, accompany the transitional period. This group of countries therefore anticipates greater responsiveness and flexibility from international mechanisms. Such adaptation is of mutual interest. We hope that the Third International Conference on New and Restored Democracies — to be held in Bucharest in 1997 — and the international conference on the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition, to be held in Minsk in 1997, will help develop new, effective forms of cooperation among the new or restored democracies, the United Nations and the entire international community. For a number of years Belarus has advocated expanding this international interaction. Together with other countries, it has actively promoted resolutions that have been adopted on the subject of "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The Republic of Belarus was a sponsor of resolution 49/30 and 50/133, and it supports the basic provisions of the draft resolution before us at this session, which reiterates language from the two previous resolutions.

Since the similarity of the goals and needs of countries with transitional economies and those with new or restored democracies is self-evident, we advocate broadening the scope of issues related to countries with transitional economies in the programme of action of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We also support a broader reflection of these issues in the draft resolution on the issue before us. In our view, resolutions on the issues should in future be complemented by provisions directing the United Nations specialized agencies to increase their attention to the interests and needs of the countries with transitional economies. We propose to focus in future on this aspect of the problem, and we anticipate support from the countries concerned.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Ecuador, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/51/L.20, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", wishes, as on earlier occasions, to voice its firm commitment to democratic processes as vehicles for bringing peace and development to peoples and for strengthening international relations.

My delegation reiterates its view that economic and social development are essential to bolster governance. In other words, such development can strengthen the ethics of power and the rule of law, consolidate democracies and lead to greater respect for human rights. In this regard, we believe that all the efforts and programmes that aim at the priority objective of eradicating poverty should be considered essential.

We also concur with the idea that the spirit of democracy in development, as well as the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in other universal instruments, are interrelated and mutually supportive concepts. As a result, it is the responsibility of the international community to offer — by all ways and means — the greatest possible support for the efforts of countries to promote and consolidate their democratic systems.

Lastly, Ecuador believes that the participation of the United Nations system in this area is essential, and thus we support the convening of the Third International Conference on New and Restored Democracies, due to take place in Bucharest from 2 to 4 September 1997. It is a suitable follow-up to the previous conferences that adopted the Manila Declaration and the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action, the importance of which has been highlighted many times this morning.

Mr. Rantao (Botswana): The subject under discussion is of great interest to my delegation. Botswana has been a practising democracy in a subregion that has hitherto been characterized by political repression and racial bigotry. For much of the past, our democracy was threatened by the existence of oppressive regimes around us.

It had therefore always been our wish to live among like-minded States that uphold the principles of peace, democracy and human rights. We are happy that our dream has come true. Today, southern Africa boasts of democratic Governments throughout its length and breadth.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, southern Africa has benefited immensely from the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system, as evidenced by technical and material support for the electoral processes in Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, in which Botswana participated.

We are obviously happy that our wider region in Africa has also embraced the democratic culture. For us, it is clearly an auspicious moment in history to be able to witness broad consensus emerging among nations of the world in support of democracy and the United Nations system's initiatives to consolidate peace, democracy and sustainable development. Everything possible must be done to ensure that there is no reversal in the gains made in the democratization process. Free men and women are the only insurance we have for world peace and human progress, and a lot will depend largely on what happens today.

Botswana has made a modest contribution to this process by demonstrating that a multi-party system of government can flourish in Africa, and that it is not only feasible but defensible. However, I must note that democracy in Botswana may not necessarily be prescribed as a model to be strictly adhered to by other nations. We believe that the development of a democratic culture is the product of a combination of the history and customs of a people. Accordingly, each nation should develop a democratic system based on its special historical and cultural background.

The western democracies, for example, are not a universal political monolith. These democracies have special and specific characteristics peculiar to the historical and cultural circumstances of each nation. The common denominator in all these democratic systems is the right of every adult to participate freely in the political process that determines the leadership of the country.

There is a lot to be copied or shared in all these systems, but we should guard against attempts to directly transplant them into countries of totally different backgrounds. The ultimate goal of every nation must be to ensure that the people themselves occupy centre stage in the decision-making processes of their country, as they are the subject and object of its development.

Botswana's democracy is not new or restored. It is not a moribund giant that wakes up or regains vitality only every five years, in time for the general elections. It is a vibrant political system that is constantly changing in response to the demands and needs of the electorate. At a recent all-party conference, far-reaching decisions were made in terms of electoral reforms for strengthening the democratic structures of government. The parties agreed to broaden the franchise by reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 years and by extending the franchise to Botswana nationals living abroad, as well as establishing an independent electoral commission.

Democracy without a transparent and accountable public administration is an exercise in futility. It is for this reason that Botswana's National Assembly passed a bill on the establishment of an Office of the Ombudsman, which will become functional by the first part of 1997. This step was taken by Parliament in order to improve public accountability, transparency and the quality of public sector management.

My delegation believes that democratization and the enhancement of good governance are essential conditions for the success of any development strategy. Botswana therefore supports United Nations initiatives and calls for more material and technical support for these initiatives to yield positive results ultimately benefiting all humankind.

To sum up, Botswana is not a new or restored democracy. It is nonetheless an evolving democracy

whose achievements still require sustenance and consolidation. We will be ready to seek the support of the United Nations system should such an eventuality ever arise.

Mr. Meléndez Barahona (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am honoured to participate, on behalf of the Central American countries, in the discussion on agenda item 41 entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". We wish to express our support for and solidarity with the statement made by the representative of Nicaragua, who, following up the Second International Conference on New or Restored Democracies, undertook an initiative to have the United Nations system examine ways and means of promoting new or restored democracies.

Our subregion has made significant progress since the signing of the Esquipulas II agreements in 1987, in which the procedure for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Central America was adopted, and in particular since 1989, when the Central American Presidents called on the United Nations to participate in the verification of the implementation of the commitments undertaken to move forward along the path of peace, freedom, democracy and development. The political scene has been marked by the shift from a military struggle to a political struggle, from repressive regimes to the establishment of democratic institutions, from destruction to reconstruction, and from rivalries and conflicts to cooperation, dialogue and concerted action.

I do not believe there is any need to reiterate the entire history of the Central American process. Since 1983 the General Assembly has been considering the question in the region — both in general and in particular terms — presenting reports each year on important events and on the role played by the Organization in seeking political and democratic solutions to the serious economic, political and social problems besetting the Central American peoples. Indeed, the General Assembly yesterday took up the question of the situation in Central America. The debate on that issue and the content of draft resolution A/51/L.18, as well as the Secretary-General's report, reflected the advances made in the peacemaking process in Central America and the progress achieved in our efforts to fashion and consolidate a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

It is noteworthy that during the crisis of the 1980s, possibilities emerged and political room was created that permitted the will of the Central American peoples to be expressed, allowing them to begin to enjoy democratic freedom. This gave rise to a political system that replaced authoritarian Governments with civilian governments freely elected by their people.

Today Central America has practical institutions and procedures that aim to meet the basic needs of the actors, in both the political and economic areas. From the political standpoint, participation in the political process is pluralistic in that there are shared standards and values, and even the differences have a commonality that strengthens democratic values. A clear example of this is the participation of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional in Nicaragua, and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), in El Salvador, in democratic electoral processes. We have no doubt that this will also soon be true in Guatemala, with the eventual signing of the agreement that will end the armed conflict in this fraternal Central American country.

Central America understands that democracy cannot be sustained simply through political freedom. Aware of the fact that economic and social problems related to unemployment, social degradation, poverty and the environment contribute to insecurity and instability, it had adopted an ambitious and large-scale regional development strategy. This strategy is governed by the principles of respect for life, improvement of living standards, respect for the vitality and diversity of the region, participatory democracy, respect for and protection of human rights, the preservation of the environment, among others.

In this context, we should mention the signing of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, adopted at the Seventeenth Summit Meeting of the Central American Presidents, held in Honduras in 1995. The Treaty provides, among other things, for the strengthening of the power of civil society; a reasonable balance of forces in the region; security of individuals and their property; the elimination of poverty and extreme poverty; the promotion of sustainable development; protection of the environment; and the eradication of violence, corruption, impunity, terrorism, and trafficking in drugs and arms.

To this end, a Central American security commission has been set up to fulfil the provisions of the Framework Treaty. It consists of the Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Ministers or competent authorities in the defence and public security sectors. It is important to

note that while these are favourable circumstances for intensifying the democratization process in Central America, serious problems and limited resources impede our efforts. However, we understand that these obstacles must be overcome by efforts similar to, and as urgently undertaken, as those that overcame the military crisis of the 1980s.

It is clear that a trend exists to consolidate democracy in the Central American region through the modernization of the State, as the entity that should guarantee the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Central American peoples and strengthen the rule of law and democratic governance. Examples of this trend are the free elections that have been held in recent years — elections that were open, competitive and fair; the respect for existing legislation; the creation of constitutional courts and the appointment of special prosecutors for human rights; the existence of independent electoral tribunals and multi-party parliaments; the promotion of autonomous and efficient judicial systems and the development of programmes to promote a culture of peace and democracy.

On this last point, at this session, El Salvador, together with other countries of Central America and of other regions, is proposing, in the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, an initiative on the theme of a culture of peace. This, in our opinion, is key to ensuring the consolidation of a democratic society, and we hope it will receive the support of all Member States.

Central America, a region in transition, is making tremendous efforts to consolidate democracy. However, it still requires the solidarity and support of the international community to make further progress and avoid stagnating or, worse, backsliding, in order to prevent any recurrence of worse regional conflict of the 1980s. For this reason, Central America welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/512) and is a sponsor of draft resolution A/51/L.20. We are confident that it will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that at the request of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.20, the decision concerning the draft resolution will be taken at a subsequent date to be announced in the *Journal*.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations

A/51/PV.62

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

62nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 November 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 21

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/172)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

(Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/213, A/51/303, A/51/315, A/51/326, A/51/353, A/51/356, A/51/464, A/51/528, A/51/560)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.22 and A/51/L.24)

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/171)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bulgaria to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.22.

Mr. Raichev (Bulgaria): Allow me on behalf of my delegation to express our appreciation for having been given the opportunity to address the General Assembly on such an important agenda item. I will concentrate particularly on the issue of economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The special economic problems arising for third States as a result of Security Council sanctions have been a subject of intensive discussion in the United Nations during the past few years. Its consideration in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other relevant United Nations bodies is an acknowledgement that the United Nations needs to intensify its efforts to address more effectively the economic problems of third States affected by sanctions imposed by the Security Council, and has resulted in the adoption of a number of important resolutions and decisions.

In this connection, I would like to mention in particular the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 48/210 of 21 December 1993, 49/21 A of 2 December 1994, and 50/58 E of 12 December 1995, appealing to Member States and to the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations system to provide on an urgent basis assistance to the States affected by the strict implementation of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

96-86870 (E)

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By these resolutions the Assembly has recognized the severity of the economic problems of the affected third States and the need to mobilize the efforts of the international community, in compliance with the Charter, in order to address the difficulties experienced by those States. The steps undertaken in this context are outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/356) submitted under this agenda item at the current session. I would like to express our appreciation for the preparation of this report, which in our view contains useful conclusions and recommendations.

I take this opportunity also to commend the efforts of international financial institutions, other international organizations and Member States which responded to the Secretary-General's appeal to take the special economic problems of the affected countries into account in their support programmes. We also note with appreciation continued attention on the part of intergovernmental and regional organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, as well as the support rendered through the Central European Initiative.

The successful conclusion of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Annexes thereto initialled on 21 November 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, and signed on 14 December 1995 in Paris ended the long and destructive conflict in the former Yugoslavia and opened up the possibility of starting the process of post-conflict peace-building and the lasting stabilization and recovery of the whole region. The suspension and subsequent termination of the Security Council sanctions were an important element in this process. We welcome and support these developments.

At the same time, it must be recognized that while the sanctions regime was lifted after the conclusion of the Peace Agreement, the long-term impact of the sanctions on the economies of the affected third States still persists. I do not intend to go into details on the continuing negative consequences of the sanctions for the national economies of those States, since detailed data on the matter has already been presented on a number of occasions. A detailed analysis of the situation with regard to Bulgaria is contained also in our national communication on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/58 E addressed to the Secretary-General and circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council (A/51/330-S/1996/721). Similar documents have also been presented by other affected countries. The continuing economic problems for the affected third States and the need for continued support by the international community are also described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/356).

Having said that, I take this opportunity to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.22, entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". The following Member States have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Bulgaria.

The draft resolution retains the main thrust of previous resolutions on the issue but reflects new developments during the past year. It expresses concern at the persisting impact on the economies of the affected third States in the post-sanctions period and reaffirms the continuing need for an adequate response from the international community and the relevant United Nations organs, programmes and specialized agencies, including the international financial institutions. The draft resolution also reaffirms the continuing need for practical measures to mitigate the negative impact of the sanctions on the affected States by supporting their financial stabilization, developing the transport and communications infrastructure, promoting trade and increasing their active involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of the region. Particular attention is paid to the possibilities opened up for strengthening multilateral regional cooperation in all spheres, as outlined in the Royaumont Platform for Action of the European Union and the Sofia Declaration of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the region on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, including the realization of cross-border infrastructure projects, the promotion of trade and investments, and so on.

We are hopeful that given the importance and magnitude of the problem I have outlined, the draft resolution will receive the unanimous support of the Member States of the United Nations and will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Cameroon to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.24.

Mr. Mpay (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): I am speaking on behalf of the African Group to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.24 on "Assistance to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia". As we are all aware, Liberia has been one of the hardest hit African countries for several years now. It has suffered a fratricidal civil war which has undermined all the country's institutions, caused severe damage to the physical and social infrastructure, driven hundreds of thousands of refugees out of the country and given rise to many displaced persons within its frontiers. This situation has brought tremendous suffering to the Liberian people, who are also facing serious economic problems. The member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I am pleased to say, have taken a number of positive initiatives designed to bring peace and reconciliation to the country.

We are aware of the work that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has done in Liberia with regard to peace and security in the country. Thanks to its presence, Liberia has not disintegrated. We also welcome the efforts of the Heads of State of ECOWAS for their peacemaking efforts which culminated in the appointment of Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry as Chairman of the Council of State. The various factions in Liberia are fighting for power. The agreement reached in Abuja was able to elicit unanimous approval for Mrs. Perry to become Chairman of the Council of State.

Draft resolution A/51/L.24 takes into account the overall situation in the country and provides for the measures needed to enable the country to free itself from its difficult economic situation. The draft resolution is almost the same as last year's resolution except for a few amendments which take into account developments in the situation in the country. Thus, in the second preambular paragraph the draft resolution takes note of Security Council resolution 1071 (1996) of 30 August 1996, in which the Council welcomed the agreement reached in Abuja in 1996 which extended the 1995 Abuja agreement until 15 June 1997. It remains to be seen if the various faction chiefs respect the agreement. In the fifth preambular paragraph, the draft resolution welcomes the induction into office on 3 September 1996 of Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry as the new Chairman of the Council of State and her efforts to restore the cohesiveness and authority of the Council.

As the Assembly is aware, the pillaging that broke out in August this year caused enormous damage in the country. Therefore the operative paragraphs of the draft resolution call on the international community to provide assistance to the Liberian Government to enable it to extricate itself from its current difficult situation.

In operative paragraph 1, the draft resolution expresses gratitude to all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have rendered assistance to the Liberian National Transitional Government and urges them to continue their efforts. Of course, the draft resolution commends the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to mobilize relief and rehabilitation assistance for Liberia. It also calls upon all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide Liberia with technical, financial and other assistance for the repatriation and resettlement of Liberian refugees, returnees and displaced persons and the rehabilitation of combatants so as to facilitate the restoration of peace and normalcy in Liberia.

The Assembly is aware that the Trust Fund for Liberia was set up to provide assistance to the country. The draft resolution therefore reiterates its appeal to all States to contribute generously to the Fund.

The draft resolution is very realistic in that we know that humanitarian organizations in Liberia are often the target of attacks. Thus in operative paragraph 5 the draft resolution deplores all attacks against and intimidation of personnel of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and ECOMOG, as well as the looting of their equipment, supplies and personal property. It calls on all factions and their leaders to respect fully the security and safety of all personnel of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and ECOMOG by ensuring their complete freedom of movement throughout Liberia.

The Secretary-General is requested in paragraph 7 of this draft resolution (A/51/L.24) to continue his efforts to mobilize all possible assistance within the United Nations system to help the Government of Liberia in its reconstruction and development efforts. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to undertake, when conditions permit and in close collaboration with the Liberian authorities, an overall assessment of needs with the objective of holding a round-table conference of donors for the reconstruction and development of Liberia.

This is the substance of the draft resolution for adoption before the General Assembly. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, Liberia is a country which has been suffering from tremendous economic problems and unspeakable human suffering. That is why the countries of Africa wish to see this draft resolution adopted by the Assembly by consensus.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. Liechtenstein and Romania have also aligned themselves with this statement.

The situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa, now so dramatically changed in the space of a few days, underlines the importance of being prepared to respond in a timely, coordinated and effective manner to humanitarian crises in order to alleviate the suffering of our fellow human beings.

At a special meeting of European development and humanitarian aid ministers to consider the humanitarian crisis in central Africa, the European Union expressed full support for the efforts of the United Nations, regional leaders and the Organization of African Unity to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the conflict, and reaffirmed the commitment of the Union to assist in every way possible.

The ministers further stressed the need to work in a coordinated manner with the international humanitarian agencies and with non-governmental organizations to ensure an effective humanitarian response to the crisis, and underlined the coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the United Nations system.

The troika of European Union ministers and the European Commission subsequently visited Zaire and Rwanda in order to acquire first-hand information on the situation. The ministers found that the United Nations agencies, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and the non-governmental organizations were well prepared, under the prevailing circumstances, for the tasks of delivering the necessary humanitarian relief and the voluntary repatriation of the refugees.

The situation has, of course, been changing in a way that was difficult to predict only a few days ago. Developments are being monitored at the highest level in the European Union and every effort is being made to provide urgently required assistance to aid agencies now in Rwanda to take care of the returned refugees and support their resettlement and to assist the refugees and displaced persons in eastern Zaire.

The European Union welcomes the promptness with which the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region in Response to the Crisis in Eastern Zaire for resources was launched and has already made initial responses, both individually and through the European Community. In addition, the European Union attaches the highest importance to the strengthening of the monitoring of human rights.

The crisis in the Great Lakes region has challenged the international community to provide effective humanitarian assistance, as it must seek to do in all emergencies which demand an international response. An even greater and more enduring challenge is to work to prevent natural disasters and complex emergencies and to facilitate, to the extent possible, a smooth transition from humanitarian assistance towards rehabilitation and long-term development, including through taking a long-term development perspective, even in the early stages of reacting to emergencies.

The Secretary-General's report (A/51/172) addressed both the ongoing efforts to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance and the related process of review of the United Nations system's capacity to respond, which was initiated by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1995. I addressed both these issues in some detail in my statement on behalf of the European Union at the Economic and Social Council earlier this year, and I intend today to concentrate on a number of areas of particular concern to us.

Some progress has been made by the United Nations system on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, but it is obvious that greater efforts are needed to improve the system's capacity to respond effectively, especially in the field. We feel that a number of the mechanisms mandated under General Assembly resolution 46/182 (1991) to help strengthen coordination could be used more effectively.

The consolidated inter-agency appeals process has worked adequately, but could be improved through more coherence in presentations and humanitarian strategies based on greater prioritization. We urge the agencies involved to intensify their cooperation with the

Department of Humanitarian Affairs to work towards a more effective process.

The other resource mobilization tool created to help ensure a timely response — that is, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund — is operating as it was expected to and has shown its value again in the present crisis. We note that there are still some problems with the effective utilization and prompt replenishment of the Fund and we urge those agencies involved to make reimbursements as a matter of urgency so as to preserve the essential character of the Fund, which is its revolving nature.

A common understanding of shared objectives by the agencies involved and a willingness to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs are crucial to ensuring an effective, timely and coordinated response to emergencies. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has a central part to play in the process of defining the role of each of the bodies involved and their relationships with each other and with the United Nations system as a whole.

The European Union stresses again the importance it attaches to the review process initiated under Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. We encourage the relevant agencies and their governing bodies to complete their reviews of individual capacities in good time, to keep in mind the overarching theme, which is a review of the capacity of the system as a whole, and to seek to give coherent guidance to the system. All the reviews should be completed in time to allow the Secretary-General to draw on their content and recommendations when preparing his report for the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

The uncertain financial situation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, where only 25 per cent of the resources needed for its functioning comes from the regular budget of the United Nations, continues to give cause for serious concern. We strongly support the appropriation of greater resources to Department of Humanitarian Affairs from the regular budget for the next biennium. We also encourage the broadening of the donor base by appealing to non-traditional donors to support the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the overall work of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian emergencies, whether natural disasters or complex emergencies.

The safety, security and dignity of all people involved in emergency situations should be a priority at all times. The increasing lack of respect for humanitarian norms and principles is a cause for serious concern, as are the threats to the security and lives of personnel in the field. The ratification by Member States of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel as soon as possible would be a step in the right direction. In cases of conflict, the provisions of international humanitarian law apply, and they must be respected by all concerned.

Allow me to use this occasion to address briefly a procedural matter under this item. While recognizing the needs of individual countries and regions, the European Union remains concerned about the large number of draft resolutions appealing for special economic assistance which are submitted under this agenda item. We commend the efforts which have been made to streamline the texts and to biennialize when appropriate. We appeal to those States involved to abide by the spirit of General Assembly resolution 50/227 when texts are being drafted, and we look forward to discussing, later in the fifty-first session, ways to improve further the decision-making processes of the Assembly.

Finally, let me reaffirm that the European Union remains committed to responding to the fullest extent possible to the plight of people in emergency situations. The response capacity of the international community can and should be improved in order, first of all, to alleviate the suffering of those affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies and, secondly, to avoid the wasteful use of resources. We expect all those involved in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system to work together to produce a substantive report and recommendations for consideration by the Economic and Social Council next year. The United Nations system must meet the challenges it faces if it is to continue to receive the support of Governments in this crucial area of international cooperation. The European Union will continue to support all efforts to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Aass (Norway): Norway welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General, presented to the Economic and Social Council at its last session, and now to the General Assembly, concerning strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance within the United Nations system. We appreciate the thorough and systematic work of the various United Nations organizations as well as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in following up Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 as

regards the review of responsibilities and capacities of the organizations in responding to humanitarian situations.

The Executive Boards or Committees of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization have all held substantial discussions on their role in humanitarian emergencies. This ongoing process should provide an excellent basis for fruitful discussions at the next session of the Economic and Social Council.

Norway has noted with great satisfaction that the issue of assistance to and protection of internally displaced persons has been a subject of debate in the follow-up of the Economic and Social Council resolution. There is a need to clarify the institutional responsibilities of agencies within the United Nations system. The growing number of internally displaced persons represents a special challenge to the international community as regards assistance, reintegration and relationships with local authorities. Norway supports the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons.

One of the systemic issues identified by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for further inter-agency discussion is the question of coordination in complex emergencies. Norway strongly supported the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure a coordinated international response to humanitarian emergencies. We are pleased to note that the Department has worked to improve its tools for coordination, among them the consolidated appeals process. We consider the consolidated appeals a good instrument for ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive response to emergencies. However, the Department often submits numerous appeals in addition to the consolidated ones. We have witnessed this in relation to the ongoing crisis in eastern Zaire. It is not always easy to understand the status of such appeals and how they are coordinated within the United Nations system. This is why we would like to emphasize that it is essential for donor Governments to be informed about the overall priorities of the United Nations system in an emergency situation. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs bears a great deal of responsibility in this respect.

An inter-agency sub-working group is now reviewing different possible options for field coordination. Norway considers this an issue of great importance, and we expect a further discussion of this at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. It is important that the report of the Secretary-General to that Council contain clear proposals and recommendations, based on the conclusions of the ongoing review process. All relevant experience from field coordination must be taken into account in working out and presenting the possible options.

It has been stated many times that prevention is better than cure, but this recognition is nevertheless difficult to act on. We have yet again seen a tragic event that the international community was unable to prevent, this time in the Great Lakes region. My Government is allocating resources to international efforts of negotiations and confidence-building measures to try to reduce the risk of open conflicts breaking out. Norway has established an emergency preparedness system, NOREPS, which enables us to call on staff and material resources at very short notice. We have also proposed to establish a fund to be at the disposal of the Secretary-General for rapid and preventive action. Still, much remains to be done in the field of prevention and contingency planning.

The United Nations and the international community have a very clear responsibility, based on humanitarian principles, to deal with humanitarian emergencies. However, we should at the same time emphasize that the countries whose populations are in need of assistance also have a responsibility to ensure access for humanitarian supplies, to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and to ensure the safety of relief personnel.

The ongoing discussion throughout the United Nations system on humanitarian relief is an opportunity for agencies to clarify the relationship between humanitarian relief and long-term development or other forms of assistance. It is important that this discussion is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council. While the discussion in the Council will not be the end of this process, it should be a step on the way to improving the assistance from the international community to those whose lives and futures depend on it.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon): It gives me great pleasure to speak on agenda item 21, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". My personal knowledge of Mr. Akashi and his long-established experience and great dedication, as well as the experiences drawn from activities pursued by the United Nations system in the operational field in my country, convince me that the subject of this agenda item is of the utmost importance

and covers one of the main roles entrusted to the United Nations under the Charter.

My delegation carefully considered the documentation on this item, especially the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. However, due to the lack of time, I shall confine my remarks to one important aspect of the report: the relationship between relief operations and reconstruction and rehabilitation activities.

The report concludes that there is likely to be an increasing need for humanitarian assistance throughout the world. It recognizes the fact that the stagnation and dramatic decrease of official development assistance funds mitigate the general assessment that assistance targeted at sustainable development may help prevent and address complex crises.

The report further recognizes the need for the international community to assist in rebuilding war-torn communities as much as it needs to address the root causes of disasters and crises. The report, however, draws attention to the fact that funding for essential rehabilitation and reconstruction activities is sometimes scarce because public interest has waned and that, for many donors, rehabilitation requirements fall between the mandates of relief and development.

My delegation noted that, as a follow up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, the Executive Boards and Committees of the United Nations operational organizations debated in particular the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development activities. Bearing in mind the experience of Lebanon, we support the conclusions of these Committees on the need to form a strategic framework for international and national action that provides for a holistic approach to the recovery needs of countries facing crisis. We also support the efforts of, among others, the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to establish closer working relations between the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian and development agencies within the United Nations system.

We also endorse the point that humanitarian assistance must be part of an integrated response; it is no substitute for other international political, military or development activities that address conflict and its root causes. Incidentally, that view coincides with the conclusions drawn by Graça Machel, the expert appointed by the Secretary-General to report on the impact of armed conflict on children.

We have always maintained that the international community should accord special attention to the case of post-conflict peace-building countries. In that respect, we share the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace" that post-conflict peace-building is a necessary condition for the consolidation of peace and security. There has always been confusion as to whether post-conflict peace-building activities should be considered as an extension of humanitarian assistance during emergencies or whether they should be labelled as normal development programmes. We believe that post-conflict peace-building activities are somewhere in the middle, but that they should be treated in an exceptional manner. They should be accorded the urgency necessary to enable them to complement humanitarian assistance given during emergencies. Without these activities, peace would remain very fragile.

It is in this understanding that we have always called for concerted efforts on the part of the international community to aid Lebanon's programmes for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Indeed, we recognize the fact that a number of resolutions have occasionally been adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to this end. The most recent of these was Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/32, adopted on 25 July 1996. We are gratified and will seek a similar resolution at this session of the General Assembly.

Everyone can easily recognize the unique but urgent situation facing a post-conflict peace-building country. I need not expound on the huge devastation inflicted on my country and my people by the 17 long years of war. Almost every aspect of our economy was severely damaged and we have been far behind the developments in the international economy. We must not only rebuild the country, but adapt to new imperatives recognized as necessary for development, especially the new concept of sustainable development and the new prerequisites created by the plans of action adopted by the international conferences on the child, population, social development, women and human settlements.

At present, however, we are encouraged by recent developments as a result of which a conference for the friends of Lebanon will be held in Washington next month at the invitation of the United States Government. We are confident that this endeavour will prove

exemplary and hope that it might be followed in the future in cases of post-conflict peace-building.

In Lebanon, some 20 United Nations organizations are entrusted with mandates ranging from peacekeeping and humanitarian and refugee assistance to reconstruction and development. Each one of these organizations is working, individually and together, in partnership with the Government and civil society to support national efforts to rebuild our country's future. It is true that we have always been aware of the importance of the role of United Nations functional organizations at the country level. However, at this time in our history, we are even more appreciative of this role, as it demonstrates the strong support of the international community for the historic efforts undertaken by the Government to reconstruct and rehabilitate the severely shattered country.

Our appreciation of the role of the United Nations organizations is expressed in different ways. One is the fact that we are implementing an ambitious plan to reconstruct a United Nations complex in central Beirut — the first building to be erected in the devastated centre of the capital. It will be a landmark, but it will exhibit all the requirements envisaged by different General Assembly resolutions to introduce better coordinated and cost-effective functional activities. We are sure, however, that the best expression of appreciation to these organizations will be the total realization of our common goal. That is our commitment.

Mr. Yuan Shaofu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): This item has been under discussion at the General Assembly for five years, since the adoption of resolution 46/182. The fifth birthday of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs is also drawing near. The Chinese delegation has noted with appreciation the unremitting efforts made by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and his predecessors, as well as their achievements in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance in actively implementing resolution 46/182 and other relevant resolutions.

It is well known that, in the past few years, the natural disasters and armed conflicts that frequently occur on Earth have resulted in the loss of countless human lives and in the massive movement of refugees. Repeated appeals have been made to the international community for emergency assistance. Humanitarian and disaster relief assistance is always in the precarious position in which demand exceeds supply. Available funds are very limited. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is currently facing extremely serious challenges.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that, in this situation, the Department of Human Affairs should continue to coordinate effectively the efforts of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance agencies, promote close collaboration and cooperation among various agencies and bring into full play the United Nations system's overall comparative advantages in providing emergency disaster relief assistance to disaster-stricken countries. It should also continue to strengthen further the management of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and mobilize the developed countries to make more contributions, expanding the available resources so as further to improve the ability to respond promptly to requests for disaster relief assistance. It should continue to conduct studies of the Humanitarian Early Warning System and develop a strong, effective and regular channel of communication. At the same time, it should continue to work hard in the last phase of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to ensure the realization of these objectives.

The United Nations had declared 1996 the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. The overwhelming majority of the victims of natural and man-made disasters live in the developing or least developed countries. It is therefore essential to mobilize the entire international community to provide disaster-stricken areas with timely humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, helping disaster-affected people in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Meanwhile, we also advocate the combination of emergency disaster relief assistance with development assistance so as to help the Governments of disaster-stricken countries to accelerate economic development, raise their scientific and technical level and strengthen their ability to prevent and fight disasters. In this way, poverty can be gradually eliminated and sustainable development realized. We hope that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant bodies will play a larger role in this aspect in the days to come.

The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned about emergency humanitarian assistance. It attaches great importance to and supports the central role played by the United Nations in coordinating various assistance activities. China is a developing country that is also disaster-prone. This year, we suffered extraordinarily serious floods seldom equalled in history. Despite such natural disasters, we responded to the best of our abilities

to the United Nations inter-agency appeals and relevant General Assembly resolutions by providing, through bilateral channels, disaster relief and special economic assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Rwanda and others. The Chinese delegation fully endorses and supports the United Nations efforts to provide special economic assistance to Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Afghanistan and other countries, as well as to the Palestinian people.

The Chinese delegation expresses serious concern over the current status of millions of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in the Great Lakes region of Africa. We believe that it is quite necessary to provide them with emergency humanitarian assistance and hope that the international community will respond positively as soon as possible.

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): Allow me to begin by commending Mr. Razali for the exemplary manner in which he has been presiding over the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to participate, on behalf of my delegation, in the consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance to individual countries or regions. My delegation would like to place on record its deep appreciation for the Secretary-General's reports, in particular for the manner in which they illustrate the various activities carried out by the Organization in its quest to meet the demands of humanitarian assistance in various parts of the world, particularly in Africa and in my own country.

In our endeavours to face the challenges of humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, the role of the United Nations is of utmost importance in providing a proper framework for effective coordination when the international community is called upon to address difficult problems emerging from natural disasters or other phenomena of a complex nature. As I speak before this Assembly today, millions of people are in despair and distress in the Great Lakes region. My delegation wishes to pay tribute to those Member States that have pledged to contribute to the establishment, for humanitarian purposes, of a temporary multinational force to facilitate, first, the immediate return of humanitarian organizations and the effective delivery by civilian relief organizations of humanitarian aid to alleviate the immediate suffering of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in eastern Zaire; and, secondly, the voluntary, orderly repatriation of refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons. My Government is working with other countries of the region with a view to lending support to the United Nations efforts in the Great Lakes.

In my own country, we are still receiving humanitarian aid, although the quantity has been significantly reduced. The end of the war created conditions that are allowing a shift from emergency aid to rehabilitation, reconstruction, reintegration and development, particularly in key sectors of the five-year Government programme. The creation of basic social services — schools, health centres and the provision of clean water — is an important activity which the Government has carried out with the support of the international community in order to establish minimum conditions for the successful completion of the repatriation and resettlement of those Mozambicans who sought refuge in neighbouring countries during the armed conflict. The operation in Mozambique has been regarded as one of the largest and most successful repatriation programs ever undertaken by UNHCR. This is one vivid example of the effectiveness of United Nations and international community assistance.

With the end of the repatriation process and the resettlement of the returning population, there has been significant progress in agricultural production and other productive activities. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report on assistance to Mozambique, the political and economic transition in Mozambique has shown signs of returning the country to stability and normality.

In spite of an economic and political achievements, the external debt has remained an impediment to the improvement of the living standards of our people. As a matter of fact, Mozambique's external debt has increased by about 6 per cent over the past two years. In 1994, debt servicing alone absorbed about 93 per cent of the country's total export earnings and represented about 28.6 per cent of the gross domestic product.

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's observation in his report on emergency assistance to Mozambique that:

> "Clearly, to achieve a sustainable debt position and regain external viability, Mozambique will require

exceptional debt relief and forgiveness." *(A/51/560, para. 18)*

It is our hope that our development partners and the international financial institutions will speed up their efforts to alleviate our debt burden.

Although demining is one of my Government's top priorities, anti-personnel landmines continue to kill people and seriously to impede the development of the country. I would like to reiterate what my Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation said here during this Assembly's general debate:

> "For us, demining is not an end *per se*. Rather, it is a process which we regard as an integral part of the overall national development process. Where possible, it has been our policy to stimulate the launching of agricultural production and related activities once demining is completed. However, given the magnitude of the landmine issue in Mozambique, ... additional resources are needed effectively to address this problem in the years ahead, in particular within the framework of strengthening the national capacity for demining." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 22nd meeting, p. 9)*

Developing countries like Mozambique, without the means and capacities to deal immediately with this menace, are counting on the international community to lend its solidarity and support by providing new technologies for safer and faster ways to rid the world of landmines once and for all. Moreover, my country fully supports the call for an international agreement to ban the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my country's gratitude to all those countries, international institutions and United Nations specialized agencies that have contributed and continue to contribute to the demining programme in Mozambique, as well as to the overall assistance to Mozambique.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that the successful impact of the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to Mozambique has been the result of commendable coordination and cooperation of all actors — the United Nations, development partners and the Mozambican Government. We, therefore, value very highly, the goal of further strengthening such coordination.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 13 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica, on agenda item 21, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance."

The CARICOM countries wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on this item, contained in document A/51/172. The report examines the context of humanitarian assistance and alludes to the fact that such assistance in the coming decade is likely to be provided in an increasingly complex environment. The report suggests that, in order to address effectively the needs of affected people and the root causes of disasters and crises, a better understanding is needed of the context in which humanitarian assistance will be provided in the future.

The report also makes the point that poverty increases vulnerability to both natural disasters and man-made emergencies. Poverty, therefore, is a complex, multidimensional problem, which leaves populations not only vulnerable to the immediate effects of disaster and conflict, but also underequipped to rebuild their livelihoods. It may also undermine the very foundation of society and exacerbate the risk of crisis.

The report also takes into account the work being done as a follow-up to the Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, which reviews the United Nations capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We note the response of several United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, which have undertaken substantive discussions as a first step in the follow-up process and the expressed commitment of these bodies to addressing the issues raised in the resolution. We commend the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for establishing a framework in order to ensure a coherent response and we encourage this Committee to continue to serve as a key tool for inter-agency coordination. We continue to note the importance of the three areas of focus mentioned in the report: the links between relief operations and rehabilitation and development, the provision of assistance and protection to internally displaced persons, and coordination in complex emergencies.

We recognize that progress has been made in strengthening coordination and cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system and other governmental and non-governmental partners in the area of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Admittedly, with the onslaught of sudden crises and the proliferation of natural and man-made disasters, new challenges and competing needs have repeatedly highlighted the importance of establishing a well-organized and adequately financed mechanism for coordination, both within the multifaceted humanitarian arena and with other elements of the international system involved in crisis management and pre-emptive action.

CARICOM Governments support the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the advancement of humanitarian concerns. We are pleased that the report states that a financial strategy for addressing the extrabudgetary requirements of the Department has been established. We would urge donor support in order to ensure that the Department has a sound financial base and predictable resources to carry out its work in the long term.

One area of immediate challenge is the situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa. We hope that the international community will continue to assist and will develop lasting mechanisms for dealing with situations such as these.

CARICOM acknowledges the importance of ongoing work in database and information compilation in a variety of critical areas, including the Humanitarian Early Warning System, which allows for the identification of potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. As the report suggests, the need for strengthening this system is urgent. In this regard, we also underscore the need to maintain regular channels of communication with field offices and regional information systems.

New technologies, particularly in data-gathering and communications, have made possible many advances in the predictability of potentially destructive natural phenomena. We know from first-hand experience the vital role that timely and accurate information can play at all stages of an emergency and we anticipate the development of close collaboration between the United Nations and our Governments in this regard in areas relevant to our circumstances.

Over the last 25 years, the damage caused by natural phenomena to the peoples and productive infrastructures of developing countries has also increased. Natural disasters, like complex emergencies, also absorb increasing amounts of global resources and retard development agendas. Besides human and economic losses, they have, in some instances, destabilized the social and political fabric of societies.

In the Caribbean, natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, storms, landslides, volcanic activity and drought have proven to be as almost as destructive as war and civil strife. These natural disasters bring in their wake fatalities, homelessness and billions of dollars in economic losses. We therefore recognize the critical component of the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the secretariat for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in coordinating the reduction, mitigation of and response to natural disasters and environmental emergencies. CARICOM member States wish to reaffirm the importance of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, which was adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in 1994. This strategy took into consideration the Declaration of Barbados and its Programme of Action and accorded special consideration to the particular situation of small island developing States. We are fully supportive of the outcomes of the Yokohama Strategy, as we are of the goals and activities of the International Decade for National Disaster Reduction. The issues these complementary activities have sought to highlight are of direct relevance to the situations of the Caribbean countries.

The extreme vulnerability of the Caribbean to natural disasters is demonstrated by the multiple occurrences of hurricanes, which leave their annual trail of misery throughout the region. Admittedly, this year the Caribbean has been spared some of the devastation of last year's hurricane season. We have, however, experienced the onslaught of some hurricanes in several countries.

The threat of natural disaster has led our region to give priority to the strengthening of national and regional institutions and mechanisms aimed at strengthening the capabilities of our disaster-prone countries in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. Chapter II of the Barbados Programme of Action provides a blueprint in which the international community gives special recognition to the vulnerability of small island developing States and to the effects of natural and environmental disasters. Strong commitment and support at the international level and by United Nations agencies operating in the field are indispensable to the successful implementation of the important actions recommended in

that Programme of Action to address the special needs of our countries.

We wish to commend the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in facilitating, mobilizing and coordinating international relief to assist affected countries to cope with the aftermath of disasters, and we continue to underscore the value of these efforts. We note that the Department, in conjunction with United Nations Development Programme, has conducted a disaster management training programme, and, with the United Nations Environment Programme, has responded to a variety of emergencies by acting as a broker between affected and donating countries, and as a clearing house and switchboard for disaster and notification alert.

The CARICOM member States wish to thank those United Nations agencies, regional agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations which have supported our efforts to develop a comprehensive disaster management infrastructure to serve the countries of the subregion. The assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Organization of American States, and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements have been of considerable significance. The WHO and PAHO, in particular, have collaborated with regional Governments in strengthening our institutional capacity for disaster management and response, have provided advisory health services in the humanitarian field, and have contributed to the capacity-building needs of the region through seminars, workshops and public awareness efforts, and through their supply management project, designated to sort and classify the arrival of large quantities of relief supplies in post-disaster situations.

The conclusions cited in the Secretary-General's report are indeed valid. Admittedly, the humanitarian enterprise is a costly one. However, the humanitarian and disaster relief imperative cannot be denied. We concur with the report that the following areas need to be addressed: prevention, preparedness and contingency planning; coordination and refining understanding of the system; availability of the resources necessary to enable the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to carry out its mandated activities; and accountability.

We also concur with the conclusion that the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters will depend on how each part of the system works and how each part, within and outside the United Nations system, works with the other elements.

In conclusion, CARICOM member States wish to reiterate the need for international humanitarian policies to emphasize and provide adequately for the continuation of relief for rehabilitation and development, if long-term solutions are to be found. We are also persuaded from our direct experience that one of the priority objectives of these policies should be the decentralization of response strategies through the strengthening of institutional disaster management capabilities at the local, national and subregional levels. We also believe that the traditional knowledge and experiences of populations and Governments in disaster-prone countries are vital resources which must be more effectively developed and utilized.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Our delegation commented in detail on the issues of strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations during the discussions at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council last summer. We fully share and support the provisions of Council resolution 1996/33 on this subject.

We would like to reiterate some of our views on the main issues covered in the report of the Secretary-General in the context of the overall situation regarding humanitarian emergencies. In recent months, we have been witnessing a number of alarming developments, and unfortunately, the dramatic tone of the report by the Secretary-General is justified. We can say without exaggeration that we are greatly worried by the facts cited, of persisting humanitarian need, an emerging trend of donor fatigue, and unequal interest demonstrated towards operations in particular countries and regions.

Against that background, we duly appreciate the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to organize and coordinate an international response to humanitarian crises. The Humanitarian Early Warning System (pre-crisis) and the consolidated inter-agency appeals process (during crisis) have a unique role to play in mobilizing collective inter-agency efforts in such situations. At the same time there is a need for all organizations to demonstrate a high level of drive and flexibility.

Events in Afghanistan have clearly demonstrated how a protracted and smouldering humanitarian crisis that has not been given the necessary attention can flare up to become headline news and the hottest item on the international community's agenda. The current situation

in eastern Zaire and throughout the Great Lakes region also confirms the potential explosiveness of incomplete conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. Russia is among those countries that in recent weeks have been actively exploring ways to save the lives of thousands upon thousands of people by stabilizing the situation in the region and providing adequate humanitarian support to the population in need. Russia is already taking practical steps to provide emergency relief, including airlifts of food supplies, vehicles and other services.

Incidentally, I should like to mention that during the past year and a half the Russian Federation, through the Ministry for Emergencies alone, has provided assistance to 18 countries totalling some $20 million, while the total volume of humanitarian relief deliveries came to more than 15,000 tons. Geographically, this emergency aid was directed both to Russia's closest neighbours — Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan — and to other countries in Asia — Afghanistan, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Lebanon — and Africa — Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Rwanda, Uganda and Zaire.

However, in the unstable circumstances of crises, sometimes halfway between war and peace, it remains important to maintain the continuum between emergency relief activities and efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction. We need to take measures to strengthen the funding arrangements for such activities, including a means for the rational linkage of inter-agency appeals with donor round tables and meetings of consultative groups. In particular, we look forward to the results of the consideration of new proposals to achieve this linkage in the executive boards of the various funds and programmes as part of the preparation of the analytical report to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1997.

Special attention should be paid to the issues of post-conflict peace-building that are expected to bridge the gap between aid and development. Here, a widely recognized challenge is to enhance complementarity and the coordination among all elements involved, including subdivisions of the Secretariat, humanitarian agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

We consider it important, particularly in the context of that so-called continuum, to maintain post-Chernobyl-related issues within the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system. The assessments and recommendations agreed on by the Quadripartite Committee at its meeting last April in connection with the tenth anniversary of that disaster should lend impetus to this area of United Nations activities. We hope that the forthcoming regular meeting of the Committee in early December will also be fruitful.

In recent years the coordination of humanitarian assistance has been substantially strengthened at the Headquarters level. A great deal has been done to improve coordination in the field. For the humanitarian sector of the United Nations to achieve due predictability in joint actions, it is important to support the expanding process of concluding memoranda of understanding between the key players of the United Nations family engaged in humanitarian operations.

With regard to the potential of the United Nations of the provision of humanitarian assistance, efforts should also be made to get rid of bottlenecks. In particular, we are of the view that in the areas of coordination, professional training, monitoring and assessment quicker and more effective results can be obtained, since for the most part it is only organizations of the United Nations system that are involved.

We are generally satisfied with the work initiated within the sub-groups established under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and we expect valuable recommendations in six key areas from that Committee's forthcoming meeting next February.

In our view, at this juncture various parties are exploring approaches to a more effective and integrated concept of emergency humanitarian response. It is not a question of speculative philosophizing but rather of reflecting on the practical efforts being made in such areas as the former Yugoslavia, the Sudan and the Great Lakes region. A new strategy is emerging from our day-to-day experience. We are confident that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the other principal actors will contribute substantially to its fine-tuning.

In this connection, we should like to emphasize the importance of giving the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as the key coordinator of the United Nations humanitarian response, the opportunity to continue its work by fully utilizing its own potential in close cooperation with its partners within and outside the United Nations system.

Our delegation supports the proposal to adopt at this session of the General Assembly a substantive draft

resolution that would enable us to focus properly on priorities in the light of the overall review of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system due next year.

Mr. Owada (Japan): In 1996, the world continued to face enormous challenges as humanitarian emergencies struck Burundi, Chechnya, Iraq and many other parts of the world. Of particular concern to us today are the developments in eastern Zaire. As our experience in these calamities clearly demonstrates, it is becoming increasingly important from the humanitarian point of view, as well as for the peace and security of the region and of the world, that the international community respond to these humanitarian emergencies in a timely and effective manner. For this purpose, it is imperative that the humanitarian activities carried out under the auspices of various humanitarian organizations and agencies, together with a number of non-governmental organizations active in this field, be effectively coordinated in such a way that there should be no lacunae in the activities nor a waste of precious resources owing to overlapping. Hence, the problem of coordination becomes extremely important. The agenda item we are now considering, on "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations", is for this reason a most timely and important one.

It is encouraging that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the executive boards and committees of the humanitarian organizations of the United Nations system are engaging in discussions on how to follow up Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, whose purpose is to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to these emergencies in an effective way through better coordination. My delegation is satisfied with the general direction of these discussions and looks forward to receiving the final report and discussing it thoroughly at the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1997. Today, I should like to offer some salient points in my delegation's thinking on this important issue.

First, the United Nations system as a whole must strengthen its capacity to respond to emergencies by promoting better coordination among its various humanitarian organizations and agencies and by making fuller use of their expertise and experience at both the headquarters and field levels. The basic principle to be observed here is that coordination will be enhanced only if each organization and agency is aware of its own specialized field of activities and tries to work together with the others as an organic whole on the basis of mutual complementarity. In this context, the recent efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies to conclude memoranda of understanding aimed at putting this principle of complementarity into practice should be commended as a step in the right direction.

Secondly, with regard to coordination at the headquarters level, the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs at United Nations Headquarters has to be the key as the conceptual centre for such coordination. I wish to pay tribute in this connection to the strenuous efforts the Department has been making under the initiative and leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, in this direction. In particular, the Department has made commendable efforts to define its role in taking the initiative for organizing and facilitating a timely response to a given emergency situation by different humanitarian agencies. Thus, the current efforts addressed to the enhancement of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which should play an important role in the exchange of information and policy coordination among the humanitarian organizations, and the improvement of the consolidated inter-agency appeals process, as well as the efforts to improve the capacity for disaster prevention and mitigation in the United Nation system, are to be commended. At the same time, Japan believes that it is essential for the Department to remain faithful to its principal function as the conceptual centre of coordination without getting into the operational field of humanitarian activities which, in principle, should be left in the hands of various operational humanitarian agencies.

Thirdly, as to coordination at the field level, my delegation believes that coordination can be most effective when it is conducted by one lead agency designated from among the various implementing agencies involved, on a case-by-case basis, according to the criteria of expertise in particular concrete situations gained through experience in conducting their activities and the permanent presence of those activities in the field. It may be true that instances will arise in which the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has to send a mission to the field to assess humanitarian needs in the absence of implementing agencies in the field. But even then, the Department should confine its work to assessing such humanitarian needs so that humanitarian activities may be put in place by the most appropriate agencies as soon as possible.

Fourthly, there is clearly a need to think through in a more systematic way the problem of how to effect a smooth transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development as a continuous process. In order to create a more coherent system to cope with this problem, my delegation believes that it is important to involve development assistance agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank at an early stage of our work, in order to take full advantage of their expertise and resources, while at the same time humanitarian assistance agencies implement programmes that will help stimulate rehabilitation and development. To that end, a mechanism should be established to ensure close cooperation between humanitarian organizations and development agencies, so that their operations may proceed in a coordinated and complementary manner. In this connection, Japan supports the recent decision by UNDP to allocate a part of its core funds to assistance in special economic situations, provided that this money is used to meet the financial needs that arise in the transitional stage from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. The concrete modalities for using these funds, however, would seem to require further careful study.

Fifthly, the issue of internally displaced persons is a delicate problem on which there has been much discussion without a concrete conclusion in IASC and other forums, in the absence of an organization that is primarily responsible for this important issue. My delegation believes that the basic principle from which we start must be that each of the humanitarian assistance agencies should be responsible for these internally displaced persons within the scope of its own mandate and that the agencies together should try to cope with a concrete situation for the protection of internally displaced persons through a coordinated framework of cooperation based on their respective speciality, experience and capabilities. How to create such a framework on the basis of this principle is a task that would need our further study. We look forward to receiving recommendations from IASC on how best to divide responsibility for addressing this issue among the agencies and how to coordinate their activities. On the other hand, it is the considered view of my delegation that we should be cautious about assigning the primary responsibility in this area to UNHCR, considering the already high financial and other burdens placed upon it.

In our efforts to improve coordination along the lines I have just described, the central coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is going to be extremely important. In this context, Japan views the present financial situation that the Department faces with grave concern, and is convinced that a radical long-term solution has to be sought on an urgent basis if we are serious about the role that it is expected to play. While my delegation fully supports the current efforts of the Department to obtain a larger allocation from the regular budget, I believe that a much more fundamental solution needs to be sought by integrating, in principle, the Department's whole expenditure into the regular budget, inasmuch as it is an integral and core part of the United Nations Secretariat. For this reason, even in the midst of the current efforts to reduce the overall budget of the United Nations, a full-fledged effort should be made to finance the Department's core activities through assessed contributions. If it is inevitable that it will in the meantime continue to have to depend heavily on voluntary contributions from donor countries, my delegation urges that it make further progress in prioritizing its activities, and undertake further efforts at rationalization and enhanced efficiency in the Department.

I wish briefly to touch upon the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). We note with satisfaction that CERF has been an effective means of bridging the financial gap and enabling United Nations agencies to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. However, the suggestion made in the report of the Secretary-General concerning the use of the Fund for protracted emergencies as well should, in the view of my delegation, be viewed with great caution, considering the original and main purpose of the Fund, which is to ensure a timely response in the initial phase of an emergency. As for another suggestion in the report that CERF should be expanded, my delegation sees no urgent need to do so at this stage, as we understand that the balance has now rebounded to a satisfactory level.

As I mentioned at the outset, one of the most important factors in ensuring the peace and security of the world today is the ability of the international community to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies. I wish to reiterate that Japan will continue to participate actively in the discussion on how to realize such an effective response.

Beginning next year, thanks to the support it has received from so many Member countries, Japan will participate in the discussions of the Security Council in the area of the maintenance of peace and security.

Japan is determined to contribute, through active participation in these discussions, to achieving our objectives and ensuring peace and stability in various

parts of the world. In so doing, Japan deems it important to keep in mind in particular that in our present-day world, peace and stability cannot be achieved and maintained solely on the basis of political and military factors, but that stable and durable peace can be realized only through efforts that take into account a wider perspective which comprises humanitarian concerns and social and economic reconstruction and development as well.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Government of the Sudan, based on its commitment to all its citizens, took the initiative to invite the United Nations to participate with the Government of the Sudan in coordinating and managing Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to deliver assistance and relief to those affected by the war. This invitation was based on Sudan's conviction that the United Nations is a neutral international instrument which contributes to peace in the world. Since the establishment of Operation Lifeline Sudan, my Government has made every effort to cooperate with international organizations and donors to deliver assistance to its citizens. It has requested the United Nations to make every effort to guarantee that the rebel factions accepted the operation. The Government of the Sudan delegated to the United Nations the delivery of relief assistance and relief to the citizens based on our confidence in the effectiveness, transparency and neutrality of the Organization.

Those are the principles upon which Operation Lifeline Sudan was based. In the short time since it was launched, no more than seven years ago, the Operation has set a precedent with regard to humanitarian policies in the field of international cooperation. We have responded voluntarily to the needs of those affected and have created safe corridors without the need for a military force or for encroaching on national sovereignty. This, we believe, is a modern example of how to deal with such situations in any part of the world. The Government of the Sudan hopes that Operation Lifeline will prove to be one of the major means of confidence-building and peace settlement, for it is one of the most important means of providing humanitarian assistance. We would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with regard to the Culture of Peace Programme. Here we wish to refer in particular to the May 1996 symposium held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, on the humanitarian dimension, of dispute settlement.

The Government of the Sudan has taken a comprehensive view of the recommendations that came out of the seminar and we have passed them on to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator. These recommendations gave us a basis on which to implement all the steps necessary to establish permanent peace.

Operations like OLS deserve consideration in other areas of the world with similar conflicts. We would like to mention the positive results of this relief operation, in cooperation with the Government, in alleviating the suffering of those affected by conflict. However, we believe that we should very carefully review into the economic viability of the Operation with a view to increasing its effectiveness and cost efficiency. We believe that we have suffered in this regard because we focused on air transport, and ignored land, rail and river transport which are much more cost-effective. The use of such routes would save vast resources which could be diverted to the benefit of those in need.

The Sudan is eager and determined to deliver relief assistance to all its affected citizens, even those in the rebel areas. However, the distribution of relief should be the result of surveys and not be based on any other consideration. The Government of the Sudan reaffirms its commitment to the results of such surveys without any distinction between populations, living under the authority of the Government and those in the rebel areas. Resolution 50/58 J of 22 December 1995 stresses the need for ongoing review of OLS to assess its effectiveness and transparency, and the need for the involvement of the Government of the Sudan in its operation. The Government of the Sudan has made every effort to implement that resolution.

We welcome a United Nations role in coordinating the relief operation. But that role should be within the framework of full participation by the Government of the Sudan and cooperation with it, for my Government cannot just abandon its responsibilities and its legitimate sovereign rights. Therefore, the Government of the Sudan reaffirms its request for complete respect for the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/58 J of 22 December 1995, which stresses the need for the Government of the Sudan to participate in the operation of OLS.

Although there is a general conviction that Operation Lifeline Sudan should continue, the Government of the Sudan notes that financing for the Operation has decreased. The appeal for financing for the Operation through August 1996 produced the following sums: $28,721,739 for the United Nations operation and

$37,415,964 for operation elements outside the United Nations system, which gave a total of $66,136,701. This is 26.6 per cent of the amount called for in the joint appeal, which shows the weakness of the financing of Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Protecting relief convoys and the safety of humanitarian aid workers are among the most important principles of OLS and of humanitarian actions in general. Our Government condemns and expresses its deep regret for the trespasses and violations committed by certain rebel factions on 25 September 1996, during which they kidnapped and tortured two humanitarian workers. Our Government calls on all parties to commit themselves very seriously to the principles governing OLS if they do not wish to undermine its main objectives. We feel that any further incidents of this sort will affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

The Government of Sudan believes that all parties are participants in and not opponents to OLS. Based on this premise, our Government welcomes cooperation in the survey, control and distribution of relief throughout Sudan, as an expression of goodwill and in order to build confidence, deepen the peace process and serve the humanitarian objectives. In this connection, we have no objection to voluntary organizations working in the rebel areas. However, they should act in accordance with the principles of OLS and Sudanese law.

The Government of Sudan, believing in the need for humanitarian work, has no objection to the formation of joint teams of Government and rebel participants concerned with humanitarian work. We believe that this is important to carrying out the surveys, because it will lead to confidence-building and allow us to gather concrete and harmonized data. Our Government is prepared to provide everything necessary in order to facilitate this operation.

My country has undertaken several steps towards the achievement of peace and stability. We signed a Charter for peace, which led eight rebel factions to express their wish to return to the homeland and to participate in the development process. Our Government issued a general amnesty and left the door open for the other rebel factions to join the Charter. Such steps have provided an opportunity for the large-scale return of populations living in refugee camps to the country. Our country facilitated these people's voluntary return to their places of origin, or to other areas where there were opportunities to work and to participate in development once there was an acceptable level of stability and security. We made all the necessary preparations in order to enable them to achieve self-reliance in production. In this context, our Government calls on the international community to support the projects and programmes for the rehabilitation and return of the refugees.

We believe, moreover, that the peaceful climate prevalent in many areas today will allow the refugees in neighbouring countries to return to Sudan. We are making every effort to welcome and resettle them in their homes. Our Government also appeals to the international community to assist in these efforts, in accordance with the international instruments relevant to refugees.

The Government of Sudan agreed to open safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected in southern Sudan. This next stage requires talks with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in order to update the previous agreement, reached in 1994. The Government believes that there is a need to reallocate the necessary sums of money in order to establish those corridors, which would allow the delivery of relief to the affected areas in a cost-effective manner.

On the other hand, the landmines haphazardly planted in the southern areas of the country constitute a serious threat to peace, security and the safety of the population. United Nations reports refer to the fact that the rebellion movement led by John Garang de Maibior has made Sudan the third most heavily mined country in Africa. This threatens the lives of civilians, particularly women and children, and has in fact killed and maimed many innocent people.

The Government of Sudan has established a national committee to monitor landmines and to protect and educate the population with regard to the dangers of these weapons. We welcome the assistance of the international community in eliminating this problem. In this connection, the Government of Sudan wishes to express its gratitude to the major donors for their readiness to participate and to assist in this field. We hope that Operation Lifeline Sudan will be given priority assistance for its implementation.

Our Government attaches great importance to volunteer work. In 1993, there was widespread discussion with volunteer organizations in Sudan. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was a participant in these talks, as were representatives of international volunteer organizations. Our Government makes every effort to support national volunteer organizations and the

institutions of civil society. We welcome coordination between our organizations and their counterparts at the international level.

Children are undoubtedly the most vulnerable targets, particularly in cases of armed conflict. It was therefore necessary to make serious efforts to protect them from physical and mental harm. In this connection, the Government of Sudan calls for the comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly in armed conflicts. The Government of Sudan continues to call on the rebel movement to refrain from harming children and from using them on the battlefield. This has led to the death and displacement of tens of thousands of children and their incarceration as prisoners of war.

Our Government wishes to announce that it is committed to protecting children in all areas, now and in the future. We call on the international community to take the necessary steps for the return of children to their families and for their mental and physical rehabilitation, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 50/153 of 21 December 1995 on abandoned children. With the special Khartoum declaration on the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have achieved full partnership with the international community with regard to this Convention.

Our commitment is irreversible where Operation Lifeline Sudan is concerned. We shall continue to make every effort in support of such a choice. Indeed, we believe that we shall very quickly move from relief to the affected population to a stage of production and active participation in the process of development and self-sufficiency. We therefore call on all our partners in this Operation to intensify their efforts to increase confidence, transparency, respect for humanitarian principles and the highest consideration for lofty, moral and humanitarian principles.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Over the past two weeks, the world's attention has been riveted on the situation in eastern Zaire. While the international community might have reacted to the crisis sooner, the manner in which action has been galvanized in recent days has been nonetheless remarkable. Countries from all parts of the world have responded impressively. For its part, Canada contributed to this effort in the political, military and humanitarian spheres with an offer of $15 million in emergency humanitarian assistance only a few hours after the appeal was launched. For the victims of this ongoing tragedy, it is not possible to do enough, but we must assure them that the efforts and resources we can bring to bear on the crisis are deployed to their maximum effect.

In short, even as we struggle to absorb the lessons of Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, the crisis in Zaire has illustrated once again the vital importance of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations system. The international community's response to this latest crisis highlights some issues surrounding humanitarian coordination and could suggest directions for long-term improvements.

What the international community has learned above all from past experience is that the response to complex humanitarian emergencies must be comprehensive and integrated. The evaluation jointly made by donors of emergency assistance to Rwanda emphasized that the political, diplomatic, military, humanitarian, peacekeeping, human rights and development aspects become inextricably intertwined before, during and after the peak of a crisis. An effective integrated response must take all these elements into account. We are all conscious of the need for strong coordination between the various political, humanitarian and military aspects of the operation in eastern Zaire.

On the political side, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Raymond Chrétien, is tirelessly travelling among the regional capitals to consult on and develop urgent plans to defuse tensions and to create a stable atmosphere for negotiations.

In the humanitarian sphere, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Assistant United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as regional Humanitarian Coordinator, and of Mr. Martin Griffiths of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to assist him. The Coordinator has been working closely with Ambassador Chrétien, particularly in discussions with Governments on questions relating to access to refugees and displaced persons. He is responsible for the strategic coordination of the overall humanitarian effort, for identifying agreed goals and for the coherence of humanitarian policies. United Nations humanitarian agencies, special envoys and representatives, non-governmental organizations and others involved in the relief effort are doing their utmost to assist Mr. Vieira de Mello in fulfilling his crucial task. We strongly encourage them to participate fully in the various coordination mechanisms currently being put in place.

(spoke in English)

Turning to the military element, there is a strong need for close consultation and collaboration between the multinational force and the humanitarian agencies on the scope of operations for humanitarian needs. Troop contributors to the multinational force will be meeting in Stuttgart tomorrow to discuss options and plans and to discuss the impact of the latest events on their mission. Major humanitarian agencies will also be attending the meeting. The changing situation on the ground; the number and nature of troops necessary; how, when and where they should go — all vitally important issues — will be under consideration. While, in view of the welcome return home to Rwanda of half a million refugees, our plans have to be revised, the original mandate remains valid: food and humanitarian assistance have to be provided and those refugees who wish to return must be assisted.

In considering the need for inter-agency coordination in all aspects of a complex emergency, Canada sees particular promise in the work of the Military and Civil Defence Unit established by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Extremely close cooperation between the Unit and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) remains vital. We encourage other agencies to identify specific requirements for military and civilian defence assets. Several airlifts have been facilitated by the Unit and we encourage countries to respond to the Unit's requests for assistance on behalf of United Nations agencies. We also welcome the negotiation of specific inter-agency memorandums of understanding, defining respective responsibilities in responding to the present crisis.

In the absence of secure available resources to meet a crisis — in other words, money in the bank — coordinated fund-raising must remain another key element of any effective humanitarian response. Despite difficulties in conducting detailed assessments in the affected areas, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has managed to issue a consolidated inter-agency flash appeal in response to the crisis. This is an additional and welcome step in strengthening the coordination of our response to the crisis. In this connection, I might add that effective coordination in the future will also require more stable and reliable ongoing funding for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Canada sees a clear and urgent need to increase United Nations regular budget allocations to DHA and, for those DHA activities where voluntary financing is appropriate, the donor base must be expanded.

Lessons from a not-so-distant past also tell us that early donor coordination is key. This Saturday in Geneva, Canada will host a meeting of donors to seek agreement on key priorities for reintegration of the refugees returning to Rwanda. The objectives of the meeting are fourfold: first, to get a better understanding of the situation of returning refugees so donor actions can have more impact; secondly, to mobilize the interest and support of donors and focus their attention on the resettlement issue; thirdly, to review what specific donors can do to best sketch out priorities for action; and, finally, Canada hopes donors and agencies can agree on the next steps to turn our commitments into action.

There is a clear pressing need for water, shelter, food, agricultural start-up kits and health services. There is also a need to support community-level dispute resolution and increase the number of human rights monitors in Rwanda.

To conclude, these are some of the ideas that have guided Canada in formulating its approach to the current crisis in Central Africa. Unfortunately, this is but the latest such tragedy to capture our attention, and it seems a safe bet that it will not be the last. It is thus crucial that we build on the hard lessons we have learned and take the steps required to ensure the most effective possible coordination of United Nations efforts in future humanitarian emergencies. To this end, Canada pledges its full cooperation with all of our partners in the Assembly's deliberations under this agenda item.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): The diverse nature of the humanitarian crises that the world has witnessed in recent years, and the increasing frequency of appeals to the international community for humanitarian aid, have highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian and disaster relief activities. My delegation is pleased to take part in our discussion today on how we can meet this need. I should first like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/51/172), which provides us with an excellent basis for our deliberations. We should like to comment on certain aspects of the report that we consider particularly important.

My delegation shares the view expressed in the report that ensuring effective coordination among the various United Nations organs engaged in humanitarian

assistance operations is of overriding importance. Considering that the recent sharp increase in demand for humanitarian assistance has not been matched by a rise in funds available for that purpose, we believe that the need to increase the efficiency of United Nations organs through enhanced coordination mechanisms is more important than ever. It serves the best interests of the victims of natural and man-made disasters, as well as those of donors, to ensure that available resources are put to optimal use.

In this regard, we note with satisfaction that, since its creation in 1992, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs has played a leading role in reinforcing coordination among the various United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian assistance. We particularly welcome the establishment of institutional arrangements such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and consolidated appeals. We also commend the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for institutionalizing discussions with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations through the "framework for coordination".

We believe, however, that much remains to be done. First, efforts should be made to draw a clearer division of responsibility among the various United Nations agencies and programmes involved in humanitarian assistance. Secondly, in the light of the stagnation of overall resources for international assistance, a system should be introduced to clearly prioritize the various assistance operations. Thirdly, coordination and cooperation should also be strengthened at the field level. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in ensuring greater cost-effectiveness and timeliness in aid operations is critical to achieving this goal. We hope that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will be able to make recommendations on these issues in its report to the Economic and Social Council at next year's session.

My delegation agrees that there is a need to forge a stronger link between relief operations, rehabilitation and development activities. The concept of a "continuum" for humanitarian aid, extending from relief to rehabilitation and development, deserves greater attention, starting with the initial phases of relief operations.

We welcome the actions taken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to integrate rehabilitation activities into development, as described in part III of the report. Considering the important role played by the Bretton Woods institutions in financing development, we also support the efforts of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to establish closer working relationships with the Bretton Woods institutions and other humanitarian development agencies within the United Nations system.

My delegation also supports the Secretary-General's view that the increased integration of relief and development activities will require the donor community to advance suggestions as to how the normally highly compartmentalized fund for relief and development can be used in a more flexible manner. However, we are of the view that the linkage between relief and development necessitates a more careful definition of the concept and a clearer division of labour between humanitarian aid organs and development programmes. Furthermore, we are concerned that a hasty incorporation of the "continuum" concept into humanitarian activities could draw already inadequate funds away from the provision of assistance to victims engaged in a day-to-day struggle for survival, who need urgent and immediate help.

My delegation also wishes to underline the importance of improving the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of United Nations humanitarian assistance operations. The existing mechanism is largely agency-specific, and, as acknowledged in the Secretary-General's report, efforts undertaken to establish joint or inter-agency monitoring or evaluation have been insufficient. After providing aid in response to a United Nations consolidated appeal earlier this year, my Government has also come to understand the need for a better coordinated and integrated monitoring and evaluation system that enhances the cost-effectiveness, impact and transparency of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

In the light of the pivotal importance of early warning and preparedness in preventing and mitigating conflict-driven crises, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs to establish a Humanitarian Early Warning System, which will help identify potential crises that may have humanitarian implications. We encourage various international organizations and non-governmental organizations to participate in developing the United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning System as a centre of information on situations of concern. The launch of ReliefWeb will, we believe, do much to help ensure faster and more widespread dissemination of information on emergencies and disasters, thus enabling all relevant

actors to reliably track the rapidly changing need for assistance as events unfold.

It goes without saying that, in the event of a natural disaster, the primary responsibility for the provision of emergency assistance to the victims lies with the Government of the country afflicted. We believe that the Government concerned must make every effort, on a high-priority basis, to help victims, including through the reallocation of Government budget resources and stockpiled materials for rehabilitation.

My Government therefore holds the view that the United Nations organizations and organs responsible for emergency assistance should take the necessary steps to improve their access to information on the actual extent of damage in an afflicted country, and on the degree of self-help measures that the afflicted country has undertaken. We believe that such steps would be beneficial, not only to the people of the afflicted country, but also to the credibility of the United Nations humanitarian assistance system.

Furthermore, we believe that the Governments of those countries seeking emergency support should make public all available information concerning the scale of damage and the need for external assistance, and allow officials from donor nations and non-governmental organizations, as well as members of the media, greater access to the afflicted areas. Such openness is worthwhile, we believe, not only because it enhances the transparency of humanitarian assistance operations, but also because it draws the attention of the international community to the plight of the country concerned. Increased transparency, in tandem with media exposure, will help to foster a greater public awareness of the need for emergency assistance, facilitating the widest possible participation of the international community in its provision.

My delegation shares with the world community a serious concern about the massive humanitarian tragedy currently unfolding in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. It calls for urgent, immediate humanitarian assistance to the refugees who have returned to Rwanda and to the displaced persons in eastern Zaire. We wholeheartedly welcome the Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs launched earlier this week. We expect a positive reaction from the international community in the days to come.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to pay high tribute to the courageous individuals who, motivated by a spirit of deep humanity, are engaged in humanitarian assistance throughout the world. The Republic of Korea, for its part, pledges to continue its commitment to the noble cause that underlies every United Nations humanitarian assistance operation.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): The United States appreciates the opportunity to share our views on priorities for the United Nations system in the area of humanitarian assistance. I should like to express my Government's strong support for the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in coordinating humanitarian assistance, and for the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Akashi.

Today, the United Nations is better prepared to respond to complex humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters than it was only two years ago. There is more effective coordination within the Secretariat among the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A Military and Civil Defence Unit has been established within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to facilitate timely, sufficient and cost-effective military and civil defence support to humanitarian agencies.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been designated as the United Nations focal point for all humanitarian mine-clearance activities and, in that capacity, has made addressing the scourge of landmines a focus of world attention. Several operational agencies have signed memoranda of understanding to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs coordinates an improving consolidated appeal process, and the dissemination of information on donor funding for appeals is thorough, professional and easily accessible through ReliefWeb.

The effects of the current Great Lakes crisis could have been far worse had there not been inter-agency contingency planning and prepositioning of stocks in the region. The information from United Nations agencies, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, made available on ReliefWeb, also has been critical to keeping interested parties current on developments in that rapidly evolving crisis. The decision to include in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Great Lakes Region funding for an non-governmental organization coordination unit and human rights monitors shows that the humanitarian community not only learns

from past experiences but also can take positive actions in response to those lessons learned.

But the United Nations still faces many challenges in responding effectively to humanitarian crises. While coordination within the Secretariat in New York has improved significantly, coordination between the Secretariat and the United Nations operational agencies at Headquarters and in the field is less than optimal. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has not yet lived up to its potential, nor have we yet learned how to make a successful transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable recovery. The number and complexity of crises continues to strain the capacity of the relief community.

However, my Government is optimistic that, by working together, Governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the private sector can make great progress, not only in delivering humanitarian assistance, but also in mitigating crises before they occur. Prevention of humanitarian crises should be a priority of the international community. In that light, I offer the following recommendations.

First, I should like to reiterate my Government's support for the leadership role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in ensuring a coordinated response to complex emergencies. A coordinated response requires a clear division of labour and an appropriate coordination mechanism that has the full support of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We often talk about coordination as if it were some cure-all or abstract concept. It is not. The goal of coordination is to reach more needy people, more quickly, with more resources. For such coordination to occur, it must build on the mandates, expertise and comparative advantage of all the agencies concerned, including the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Secondly, the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should be strengthened. It should serve both as the primary mechanism for inter-agency decisions on humanitarian issues and as an effective forum for immediate inter-agency decision-making on rapidly evolving crises. We recommend that all members of the Committee share in the preparatory process for its meetings and take ownership of that process. Each member should designate a focal point within his organization who could ensure that organization's fullest possible participation in the Committee.

Thirdly, ReliefWeb is a tool whose utility increases exponentially as the number of its users and contributors expands. We strongly encourage those involved in emergencies worldwide to post their reports on ReliefWeb so that it can achieve its potential as the global information system for the dissemination of reliable, timely information on emergencies and natural disasters.

Fourthly, we encourage members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to work closely with the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks to ensure that rehabilitation, reconstruction and long-term development are addressed in a more effective manner from the earliest possible stages of relief. We encourage the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to use its TRAC 3 resources actively to facilitate such strategic planning.

Along with asking the United Nations system to improve its provision of humanitarian assistance and facilitate the transition to development, we Governments must also do our part. It is essential for all States whose populations are in need of humanitarian assistance to facilitate the work of the humanitarian community. They must also ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. All parties must respect the sanctity of international humanitarian law and norms of behaviour. Governments must give coherent directions to governing bodies of relevant United Nations organizations in order to promote cooperation between those organizations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Finally, we must create a sound and stable financial basis for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. It is unacceptable that the Department must rely on voluntary contributions for more than 65 per cent of its total funding requirements. We urge Member States and the Secretary-General to explore all solutions to achieve an adequate level of financing for the Department from the regular budget for the 1998-1999 biennium.

Coordination and cooperation among Governments, international organizations and the non-governmental organizations are key elements in the search for solutions. The United States enthusiastically supports efforts undertaken through Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 to examine the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. We look forward to the comprehensive analytical report that the Secretary-General will submit to next year's session of the Economic and Social Council in this regard.

Mrs. Osode (Liberia): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Department of

Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and Under-Secretary-General Akashi for improving the coordination activities of the United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance in areas of need around the globe. In particular, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, contained in document A/51/303 of 23 August 1996, now under consideration, which gives a thorough overview of the involvement of the United Nations and the humanitarian community in the Liberian peace process.

Until the world witnessed yet another tragic event in the capital city, Monrovia, in April and May this year, Liberians and the world had reason to believe that a resolution to the Liberian conflict was on the horizon. Liberians were returning home to their country in larger numbers and the Organization had a strategy to meet humanitarian needs, while increasing self-reliance and restoring essential services and infrastructure without perpetuating the disparities that had contributed to the conflict. The war was so senseless, vicious and devastating. The Secretary-General expresses his regrets in his report that many of the humanitarian initiatives have been derailed, some irreparably.

The civil war has destroyed the country's economic and administrative infrastructure, making humanitarian assistance essential. Inside the country, more than one million people, including thousands of internally displaced persons, need humanitarian assistance. Recent improvements in access to some areas have made it possible to reach communities cut off from assistance for a year or more. Nearly two million refugees and internally displaced persons received assistance through the subregional programmes of the World Food Programme before the war in Monrovia. Today, that number has drastically dwindled. Far less than 20 per cent of Liberia's pre-war health facilities are operating and many medical personnel have been killed or have fled. Programmes are badly needed for women, orphans and street children, child soldiers, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Compounding what seems to be an already daunting problem is Liberia's nagging debt burden of over $1.8 billion and the severe impediments to generating funds.

My delegation agrees that the United Nations is overburdened with an increasing demand for emergency and humanitarian assistance. However, we must say without equivocation that the United Nations is the only global Organization that is equipped to offer hope and relief to the millions of suffering people in conflict and disaster situations.

With the revalidation of the Abuja Agreement on 17 August 1996, a new Chairperson of the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government, whose presence graced this body on 9 October 1996, was appointed. Since her appointment and induction into office on 3 September 1996, Mrs. Ruth Perry has endeavoured to make the Council cohesive. She has continued to work closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine on Liberia. Her endeavours to promote consensus among the hostile factions, encouraging them to seek reconciliation instead of confrontation, and her caring ways have won her widespread support among Liberians and members of ECOWAS.

The Liberian people are very much aware of the difficulties that lie ahead and cannot be underestimated; we are not going to delude ourselves into thinking otherwise. However, we are optimistic that, with the commitment and political will of members of the Council of State, as well as the resolve of Liberians to move forward in bringing peace, reconciliation and unity to their country, international assistance for Liberia will become generous and even more justified.

We appreciate the continuing interest of the international community in Liberia and the various steps being undertaken to further the peace process. We note with gratitude that a ministerial meeting consisting of core donor countries and the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, is today convening in Brussels, Belgium, at the invitation of the Belgian Government, under the auspices of the United Nations. The meeting is expected to review the progress made in the peace process and to assess the specific assistance required to keep it on track. The meeting is a follow-up to the very constructive Special Conference held on 22 October 1996 at United Nations Headquarters in support of the peace process in Liberia. We also note with further appreciation the response of those States and donors to the Secretary-General's invitation of 30 May 1996 to provide information on assistance to Liberia.

The role of countries in the region, in particular that of Nigeria, has been encouraging and decisive in the new peace process. It is pleasing to note that the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has already made reconnaissance missions to assembly points for the disarmament of combatants, which will begin on 22 November 1996 and conclude on 31 January 1997. The ECOMOG Field Commander, Major-General Victor Malu, recently assured the

international community and donor countries that the disarmament process will begin as scheduled

> "no matter the strength of additional troops that would have arrived in the mission area".

In this connection, I would like to reiterate the appeal of the Liberian Government and the Secretary-General to all States to contribute generously to the Trust Fund for Liberia, which was established by the Secretary-General and ECOWAS, *inter alia*, to assist ECOMOG in its mandate and to avoid any further setback in the disarmament process. I take this opportunity to express my delegation's thanks to those States that have responded to the appeal. States should also assist in meeting one of the great challenges facing the country: demobilization and the reintegration of former fighters. As the Secretary-General has rightly commented, there cannot be peace until combatants are provided with credible alternatives to a life of violence.

During the nearly seven years of conflict, the provision of essential services has fallen largely to the humanitarian community. We wish to recognize its great contributions. Its agreed mission statement reflects the unified views of its signatories regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance in Liberia. For its part, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing basic equipment and supplies to key Government agencies to assist in the rehabilitation of their infrastructure. Its recent announcement that it would provide a $700,000 mobile traffic control tower for the James Spriggs Payne airfield in Monrovia has been welcomed with great enthusiasm by my Government.

Finally, my delegation wishes to underscore that we are at a critical stage in the Liberian peace process. Countries of the West African region are making concerted and determined efforts to ensure that the peace process is not derailed. The international community has a moral obligation to assist in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia towards a brighter future, thus upholding the morals of our Organization. My delegation would like to assure this body that Liberia, with the grace of God, will endeavour to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr. Gerus (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the Republic of Belarus on agenda item 21, related to strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

In its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the General Assembly stated its deep concern about the suffering of the victims of disasters and emergency situations, the loss in human lives, the flow of refugees, the mass displacement of people and the material destruction, and set forth a number of guiding principles and measures to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system.

We are satisfied at the fact that work related to the reduction and mitigation of, and the response to, natural disasters and environmental emergencies has become — as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/51/172) — a basic component of the implementation of resolution 46/182 by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The Republic of Belarus deeply appreciates the efforts made by all the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system towards providing increased, speedier and better quality assistance to the various countries and regions suffering from armed conflicts, natural disasters, industrial ecological catastrophes and other emergency circumstances.

Today we would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to certain aspects of international interaction in mitigating the effects of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Document A/51/633 contains a letter from the President of the Republic of Belarus addressed to the Secretary-General and a memorandum from the Government of my country specifying the principal Belarusian strategies for developing long-term international cooperation in the second post-Chernobyl decade.

The need to consider these issues stems from the fact that the world has never before experienced an environmental disaster of this scale. The number of victims is now in the thousands, and people continue to suffer from the consequences of this disaster. As members are aware, 70 per cent of the fallout from Chernobyl fell on Belarus, and the average radiation burden on the population is the highest in the world. The incidence of thyroid cancer has increased several hundredfold, and the birth rate has dropped by 40 per cent. The Government of Belarus has had to allocate up to one quarter of its national revenue to resolving post-Chernobyl problems and has instituted a 12 per cent Chernobyl tax.

That is why the Government of my country attaches vital importance to United Nations activities to mobilize

international assistance for Belarus and the other countries most severely affected by Chernobyl. We are grateful for the efforts that have been made by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in contributing to the noble cause of assisting the victims of Chernobyl.

We are also pleased that the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, adopted a resolution placing the Chernobyl issue on the agenda of the Assembly's fifty-second session in 1997. We are convinced that the Assembly should continue to consider this issue at subsequent sessions.

On the whole, the Government of Belarus commends the efforts of the United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and programmes to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. At the same time, we are somewhat disappointed at the meagre response of individual intergovernmental organizations to the Secretary-General's appeal to provide assistance to projects to minimize the tragic consequences of this disaster.

We believe that such a response is an indication of a lack of coordination and complementarity in the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system in the area of issues related to Chernobyl. Over the past five years, there have been five United Nations Coordinators for International Cooperation on Chernobyl. The Chernobyl secretariat was completely reorganized four times. In our view, such instability in staffing cannot be explained only by efforts to reform the United Nations Secretariat.

We are deeply convinced that the main problem continues to be that of financing the list of priority Chernobyl-related programmes and projects reviewed by the United Nations in 1995. We are well aware of the Organization's critical financial situation and we are not counting on further resources from its budget. In this regard, I should like to recall that, in November 1995, the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl entrusted the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs with the task of developing a strategy for appealing to intergovernmental financial institutions and donor countries to finance Chernobyl-related projects.

The economy of Belarus is gradually recovering from the damage caused by the Chernobyl disaster, and this work continues to be a priority in the Government's socio-economic and scientific and technological programmes. However, Belarus, like other countries in transition most severely affected by Chernobyl, is not in a position to solve the whole range of problems on its own. The need of these countries for resources to overcome the consequences of the disaster is many times greater than its economic and technological capacities.

In particular, my country is in dire need of international financial and technical assistance to support the long-term medical programmes being carried out with the participation of the World Health Organization (WHO), which will have the greatest effect on the rehabilitation and sustainable development of the affected districts.

Belarus would like to see greater results from the work of the mechanism for coordinating United Nations Chernobyl-related activities. We propose that at its scheduled December 1996 meeting, the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl specify the phases and modalities for advancing medical and environmental projects and programmes in order to ensure the sustainable economic and social development of Belarus and other most severely affected countries in transition, which find themselves in a critical situation as a result of the Chernobyl disaster.

I should like to mention the following priority areas for international post-Chernobyl cooperation with Belarus: first, a concentration of the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations on providing medical and other free assistance to the most affected groups of the population, namely, children, personnel involved in cleanup operations and inhabitants of evacuated areas; secondly, consolidation in the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations of a long-term policy approach to solving post-Chernobyl problems; thirdly, promotion of bilateral cooperation on Chernobyl between Belarus and donor countries as an additional basis for international research and practical projects; and, lastly, dissemination of balanced and objective information both among the affected population and throughout the world.

We believe that those proposals could contribute to an appropriate division of labour among the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the Organization's Secretariat, taking into account their individual advantages.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to announce some additions to the programme of work of the General

Assembly which appeared in document A/INF/51/3/Rev.1/Add.2.

On Wednesday, 27 November, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", agenda item 26, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization", and agenda item 159, entitled "Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion".

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations

A/51/PV.63

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

63rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 November 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 21 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/172)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/213, A/51/303, A/51/315, A/51/326, A/51/353, A/51/356, A/51/464, A/51/528, A/51/560)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.22 and A/51/L.24)

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/171)

Mr. Bohayevsky (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine wishes to take this opportunity to present our views on two issues that are related to the agenda items.

Our first concern is the arrangement of special economic assistance to countries that have experienced the negative consequences to their economies of sanctions imposed by the Security Council against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

We have carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General on this issue (A/51/356), which provides a sound basis for the further analysis and consideration of this problem. At the same time, this document, in our view, contains no evaluation of the effectiveness of joint efforts within the United Nations system or recommendations of a universal nature in this regard.

We support the conclusion contained in this report that new and additional financial resources from all potential funding sources, especially at the bilateral and regional levels, are necessary to address a variety of persisting economic problems of the affected States, in particular the long-term effects of sanctions on their economies.

The conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement opened good prospects for the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the Balkans, and that was a very important achievement. As a result of progress made in implementing the Peace Agreement, the sanctions were lifted, but their effects have not yet been eliminated or even mitigated.

The delegation of Ukraine considers that the issue of special economic assistance to countries affected by the sanctions regime should remain on the agenda of the

96-86876 (E)

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Fifty-first session

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United Nations, taking into account the fact that the previous resolutions on the issue have not been duly implemented, at least with respect to my country, which has not received adequate assistance to cover the tremendous losses caused by its strict and consistent observance of the sanctions regime.

In this context, I would like to note that the Security Council imposes sanctions on behalf of the whole international community and, therefore, all United Nations Member States should bear the responsibility for their implementation and their consequences.

The recent experience of Ukraine has also revealed that there is a need for a comprehensive and unified methodology for determining and evaluating the economic situation of non-target States so as to assess their losses with a view to reducing the negative impact of sanctions on their economies.

In document A/51/226, Ukraine has proposed specific measures as possible elements of the compensation mechanism. Such a mechanism, *inter alia*, should provide for the opening of special lines of credit by international financial institutions to render direct financial assistance to third countries to support technical projects carried out in those countries. The donor countries should introduce, on a bilateral or multilateral basis, trade preferences for third countries, including promotion of their exports. The donor countries should also support, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, investments in the economies of third countries, with special preference being given to the spheres that sustain direct losses from the sanctions.

In the case of Ukraine, such measures could be supplemented, for instance, by reducing its contribution to the financing of peacekeeping operations and by introducing a special regime of participation in post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Our delegation also considers it expedient to create, under Article 29 of the Charter of the United Nations, a standing Security Council sanctions committee. It could be given responsibility for estimating the economic losses of the affected States, conducting research on the regional economic and socio-economic consequences of sanctions, coordinating measures to minimize their after-effects, monitoring their strict observance and so on.

Our second, but no less significant concern is how to solve the problems caused by the Chernobyl disaster, which continue to seriously affect the environment and people's health. Over the past years, the scale of the tragedy has emerged very clearly and the problems of coping with the consequences require immediate solutions.

Our delegation shares the concern expressed by previous speakers about a lack of sufficient coordination in the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat and organizations and agencies of the United Nations system in Chernobyl-related activities. In this connection, our delegation would like to support measures aimed at developing long-term international cooperation in the second post-Chernobyl decade. We still believe that these problems have a global dimension and that they therefore require special attention and adequate involvement on the part of the entire international community.

We are clearly conscious of the many problems of various kinds and dimensions facing our Organization today. However, the two problems to which we have drawn the attention of this Assembly should continue to be placed on the list of priorities.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): Malaysia joins other delegations in expressing its appreciation for the efforts that have been and are being undertaken by the United Nations and its agencies towards providing humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, including special economic assistance. My delegation also shares the views that have been expressed on the need for better coordination in providing this assistance, as the world continues to face the challenges of disasters and emergencies in Zaire and other places.

My delegation would now like to talk in some detail on sub-item (d), which relates to the question of assistance to the people of Palestine. Malaysia would like to express its appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/51/171). My delegation feels that the report provides a comprehensive background to activities that have already been undertaken and are being planned for the development of Palestine and the social and economic improvement of the Palestinian people. We particularly applaud the efforts that have been made towards meeting the needs of the Palestinian people in the fields of education, employment generation, health, infrastructure, institution-building and the development of the private sector.

My delegation is also gratified that, as a result of the Paris Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People, approximately $805 million has been pledged by donors for investment projects. The

report also informs us that an additional $72.5 million has been pledged towards the 1996 Palestinian Authority recurring budget deficit, projected at $75 million. My delegation, however, believes that these pledges are not sufficient. We take this opportunity to urge the international community to continue to contribute the much needed funding to assist the Palestinian people in rebuilding their economy and their nation.

Even as we welcome these projects, we must remind ourselves of the reality of the situation on the ground. The Secretary-General, in his report, commented on the severe setback to peace and development brought about by the suicide attacks in February, and on the devastating effect the attacks had on the Palestinian economy. As a result, domestic unemployment has risen sharply because business, trade and commerce have no access to external markets. An estimated 70,000 Palestinians who were working in Israel at that time were unable to enter the State owing to the closure of the occupied territories by the Israeli regime.

In September of this year, the world witnessed the eruption of yet another spate of violence; this time brought about by Israel's blatant act of provocation in opening a tunnel in the immediate vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This deeply upset and angered the Palestinians, as well as the Muslim world. Malaysia and other Muslim countries have condemned what happened, which was born out of Israeli insensitivity towards Palestinian and Muslim feelings.

The grim reality is that all the planning and projections will come to naught if the situation on the ground does not permit the quick and effective implementation of the development projects defined by the United Nations and its agencies. All the monetary resources at our disposal will also mean nothing if these resources cannot be put to good use to help the Palestinians.

I would once again like to stress that it is imperative that the momentum towards a successful conclusion of the peace process in the Middle East should not merely be maintained, but should be genuinely pursued by all sides. Any attempt to disrupt the peace process would only aggravate instability and bring about renewed violence and further unrest, maybe even a bigger or unlimited escalation. This can only be to the detriment of the development of Palestine and consequently to overall peace and stability in the region.

Israel, too, could not escape those consequences, so it is to its advantage to implement the Middle East peace process scrupulously and immediately. I repeat: the present Israeli Government must honour all peace agreements that Israel has made with the Palestinian Authority. Any departure by the Israeli Government from these agreements would dash all hopes of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians and the Arab and Muslim world.

Malaysia would like to reaffirm its total commitment to and solidarity with the Palestinian people and its leadership in the attainment of its inalienable right to self-determination and to exist in peace as an independent and sovereign State.

The strengthening of the economy and the improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinians is a critical element and a prerequisite — a condition for a lasting peace and security. The people of Palestine must be assisted, to enable them to stand on their own feet. This is a commitment which the international community must strive to fulfil as quickly as possible.

Mr. Avalle (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I address the Assembly at a time when the international community is engaged in seeking a solution to the extremely grave situation of the refugees in the Great Lakes region. This dramatic situation once again underscores the responsibility and the moral obligation that we all have to relieve the suffering caused by emergency situations and to assist the affected peoples to rebuild and rehabilitate their societies once the emergency is over.

By resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, the General Assembly gave the Organization an explicit mandate to act rapidly and in a coordinated manner to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to countries affected by natural disasters or by other kinds of emergencies.

In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's appreciation for the work done by Mr. Yasushi Akashi as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. We believe that his activities in such a complex area are a clear example of dedication and leadership, which deserve recognition.

We agree with the Secretary-General that extreme poverty significantly increases social vulnerability, which, combined with the political fragility of a society, creates a situation that can easily lead to humanitarian catastrophe. It is for this reason that we believe that it is

vital to move forward in designing early warning mechanisms that will enable the United Nations to identify potential conflicts and provide the necessary assistance before it is too late.

Undoubtedly, given the enormous humanitarian demands made by the world today of the Organization, it must be provided with new and appropriate mechanisms to tackle this challenge. This is why the Argentinean President, Carlos Menem, in October 1993 presented an innovative idea in this Assembly that was supported by an overwhelming majority. This idea, better known as the White Helmets Initiative, quickly became a reality in the United Nations system's activities related to humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for development. We are pleased to see, five years after that event, that the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization and in the report now before us, recognizes the political and institutional importance of the initiative as well as its operational and financial viability.

Our experiences in Haiti, Jamaica, Palestine, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Angola and Armenia have also shown us ways to improve the ways in which the White Helmets are deployed and provide assistance in emergency situations. Moreover, and it is important to emphasize this, they have shown us ways of improving rehabilitation and economic reconstruction in the countries requiring such assistance. The substantial financial support and the confidence shown by various countries, such as France, Germany, Italy and Saudi Arabia, have undoubtedly been a critical element in this success.

In the particular case of the Great Lakes region, Argentina is finalizing the logistic aspects with a view to sending an aircraft with supplies and a contingent of White Helmets to the region to supplement the work already being done by the United Nations. In this respect, we would like to underscore the role played by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, in the Great Lakes region. We are working closely with her in completing the final details of our operation.

However, we would like to add that we believe that United Nations activities should not end once the humanitarian emergency has disappeared from the front-page headlines. For this reason, we have proposed that the White Helmets should participate in the reconstruction of the economy, and in particular help to build housing in Rwanda.

In conclusion, we believe the United Nations should play a significant role in the international system of the twenty-first century. In this context, one of the major challenges we face on the threshold of the new century is the need to find mechanisms that will make it possible to relieve the pain and suffering caused by disasters and emergencies of all kinds. Without a solution to this question, sustainable development and the viability of future generations will undoubtedly be seriously compromised.

Mr. Awaad (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Under this agenda item, the statement of the Egyptian delegation will relate to the assistance provided by donors in the United Nations to the Palestinian people. I do not believe I am stating anything new when I draw the attention of this Assembly to the range of assistance and support that the Palestinian people has received from the Government and people of Egypt.

The Madrid Conference in 1991 and the Oslo negotiations in 1993, as well as all the subsequent conventions that were signed thereafter, represented important milestones along the path of the Palestinian people towards self-determination. This has required Egypt to contribute to the extent of its possibilities to improve the fraternal Palestinian people's ability to manage its internal affairs and control the economic situation to the benefit of that people, which has suffered and continues to suffer the negative consequences of foreign occupation. This assistance and support are particularly necessary because of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza as a result of the breakdown of the peace process and the arbitrary action taken by Israel — the blockade and the blockage of the circulation of workers and business people imposed in that area. This further deepens the tragedy of the Palestinian people.

After the election of the Palestinian Authority, Egypt offered its support to permit that Authority to take office. President Mubarak helped in setting up a committee to determine how each Egyptian Government ministry could help in promoting the work of each part of the Palestinian Authority. A number of agreements were signed with the Palestinian Authority, such as those relating to transport, communication, postal services and so forth. Agreements were also drawn up to establish institutional links between the organs of that new and young State and their counterparts in Egypt, which in practice is reflected in the assistance provided by Egypt in the areas in which the agreements have been signed. Egypt has also helped to train some high-level Palestinian police officers who now

form the core of the Palestinian police. They carry out their national duties with great competence and on the basis of strict discipline. In addition, Egypt has offered its services to those senior staff chosen as spokespersons abroad to promote the cause of Palestine and represent it in international bodies.

Egypt has also taken part, along with other parties, in a range of tripartite cooperation arrangements, providing technical expertise to the Palestinian people. Here I would like to refer to the agreement between Norway and the Palestinian Authority with a view to training nursing managers for the medical services to help meet the great shortage among the Palestinian people.

We have also worked on the development of the Port of Gaza in order to make it an important outlet, enabling Palestine to have communications with the outside world. Throughout, Egypt has been participating in various economic projects to enhance the performance of the Palestinian economy and to save it from the arbitrary restrictions imposed by Israel, which could have very damaging effects if they continue.

Egypt's role is not confined to providing moral or physical assistance or assistance in kind. Egypt is doing its utmost to prompt all other friendly countries to increase their assistance and their commitment with a view to helping the Palestinian Authority so that the Palestinian leaders may realize their dreams that the Palestinian people, who have so long suffered oppression and displacement, might enjoy the fruits of peace.

I should like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and all other relevant bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system for providing the requisite support to the Palestinian people. I should like also to pay tribute to Mr. Larsen, the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, for the integrated and targeted programme that was adopted in June 1995. It is important for coordination to be strengthened among all the bodies of the United Nations system, and among them, the donor countries and the Palestinian Authority. During the Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 9 January 1996 in Paris, all the parties concerned reaffirmed their commitment to increasing assistance to the Palestinian people on the basis of the priorities established for development activities. The role of the Special Coordinator, who has already done praiseworthy work, should be enhanced so as to minimize the negative effects of decisions taken with regard to the closure of the borders and the blockade.

We should also like to pay tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the initiatives taken by its Commissioner-General, and the international coordination that it is providing in terms of organizing assistance to the Palestinian people. We believe that, as a result of our efforts and assistance, the Palestinian people will be able to take their first steps along the road to economic development. We should like to pay tribute to all the countries of the world that are committed to providing such assistance. We urge them to fulfil their promises. We also appeal to all countries that have not yet provided assistance in this regard to do so in order to achieve this lofty objective, which will promote peace in the Middle East as a whole and will be of particular benefit to the Palestinian people, who are courageously trying to establish their own state in their own territory.

Mr. Manor (Israel): The world faces enormous humanitarian challenges in Africa — the most recent in eastern Zaire — and in other regions of the world. Throughout the world there is a direct connection between economic prosperity and political stability. Likewise, there must also be a strong link between relief and assistance operations and sustainable economic development.

The State of Israel is fully aware of the importance of economic growth and prosperity to the political stability of the Middle East. Israel therefore supports the provision of substantial economic assistance to the Palestinians, which will help to achieve a greater measure of peace and stability in our region. It should be noted that Israel has taken active steps to contribute to the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the Palestinians. In fact, the donor countries are meeting in Paris this week, with Israel's active participation, to review the state of contributions to the Palestinians. We welcome the concerted efforts of Member States, international financial institutions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to aid the development of the West Bank and Gaza.

For many years, Israel has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as with other international organizations, in implementing programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of

the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It is our view that the United Nations should increase its efforts and funding to assist the Palestinians in the territories, thereby facilitating the successful implementation of the agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinians.

The State of Israel is fully committed to the implementation of all the agreements signed between Israel and its neighbouring countries and with the Palestinians. The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement and the Israel-Jordan peace treaty are momentous achievements on the road to peace. They open new opportunities for economic and social progress, cooperation, prosperity and peace for our region. The Middle East peace process deserves the support of the international community.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to extend, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report relating to the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance. This clearly reflects the nature of the humanitarian situation prevailing in the world, especially in the developing countries. We would also like to express our great appreciation for the humanitarian efforts undertaken by the relevant Departments and competent organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to mitigate the suffering of the peoples affected.

While the international community recognizes the gravity of the deteriorating humanitarian crises, whether they result from natural disasters or from armed conflicts, international efforts in numerous regions of the world are still unable to tackle some of these crises. This, in turn, affects the future and welfare of humankind.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to the provision by developed countries of developmental and economic assistance to developing countries to help them to achieve human, social and economic self-development. We affirm the importance of strengthening international coordination, especially among United Nations agencies and specialized international development organizations — foremost among which is the World Bank — in order to mobilize and help the flow of economic resources to support millions of poor people in overcoming their socio-economic problems and building the infrastructures of their societies.

On the basis of its humanitarian beliefs and convictions, which derive from its society's traditional culture and civilization and from the tolerant teachings of the shariah of Islam, and under directions from the President of the State, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates has been eager to provide all forms of support to many developing countries, especially those that have been victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts, as is the case in Palestine, Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan and other countries.

In pursuit of its humanitarian policy in this regard, the United Arab Emirates has established philanthropic organizations, foremost among which are the Sheikh Zayed Foundation and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society. These organizations have been established to mobilize public and private sector efforts and to respond to human needs in affected areas of the world, especially in numerous developing countries.

The persistence of poverty, the deterioration of the environment and the failure to settle disputes in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the rules of international law have greatly contributed to the expansion and complication of armed conflicts throughout the world. The experiences of the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Great Lakes region in Africa are but a few examples. Thus, it is incumbent on the international community to enhance its peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts and to promote post-conflict peace-building in order to secure stability and reinvigorate the development of the peoples affected by these conflicts.

Concerned by the increasing suffering of millions of victims of natural disasters, emergency situations and armed conflicts and by the attendant loss of life, flows of refugees, mass displacement of populations and infrastructure devastation, the United Arab Emirates declares its support for international efforts to assess and enhance the capacity of the United Nations and its specialized agencies to address these grave international humanitarian problems and to strengthen the participation of the international community. In this regard, we affirm the importance of establishing a database to facilitate the prompt response to potential emergencies and to establish an early warning system to prevent humanitarian crises from deteriorating, particularly since such deterioration can be difficult to contain in both the short and long terms.

Statistics show clearly the recession of the base economy of Palestine since the Oslo negotiations. This is a result of the coercive measures that the Israeli occupation authorities have taken against the Palestinians. These include the closing off and sequestration of the occupied Palestinian territories, the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from the cities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the erection of obstacles to the implementation of the assistance programmes of international humanitarian agencies. These measures have led to the spread of poverty, hunger and disease among the Palestinians and their impact is reflected in the fact that Palestine's gross national product has been reduced by more than 50 per cent and its level of unemployment has risen to more than 63 per cent. These figures are the greatest indicators of the deterioration of Palestinian society under the Israeli occupation. The Israeli measures constitute a blatant violation of the peace accords and of all relevant international norms and instruments.

The United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to the strengthening of international development assistance for the Palestinian people so as to enable it to establish its national structures and to develop its technical skills and capacities in order to promote economic and social development. We call upon the international community and the donor States to honour the commitments they have made so as to secure a decent life for the Palestinian people and to enable it to achieve its aspirations to self-determination and to establish an independent state on its national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: In accordance with resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would mention that, as regards a procedural problem we have faced, we will continue to work towards a solution of all such problems in full cooperation with the President of the General Assembly.

The economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the living conditions of the Palestinian people there have actually worsened over the last two years. In fact, the economic situation and living conditions are in many respects worse now than they were before the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993. The gross domestic product dropped by about 9 per cent in 1995 and projections indicate that it will likely fall by about 15 per cent this year. The per capita income of Palestinians has dropped from $2,600 to $1,800, while in Israel, for instance, the per capita income is approximately $16,000. The Palestinian unemployment rate has reached the unprecedented and dangerously high level of 50 per cent. Furthermore, Palestinian exports have also dropped, the budget deficit of the Palestinian Authority is increasing and accompanying social and political problems are on the rise.

Donor countries have delivered some of their pledged contributions, which stood at $2.4 billion at the Washington summit in October 1993 and were to be disbursed over a five-year period. The distribution of the aid, however, has been slow and marred by all types of problems. Furthermore, even this amount of international assistance has been offset by Israeli policies and measures, which have been the main cause of the deterioration of the situation and have practically precluded — in fact, strangled — any economic improvement and growth.

At the forefront of these Israeli policies and measures is the closure of the Palestinian territory, which in reality has meant the obstruction of the freedom of movement of persons and goods within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Jerusalem, and between the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to the restriction of movement to and from Israel and the outside world. This closing off has also prevented Palestinian workers from taking any jobs in Israel, even though, as part of Israel and Palestine's economic agreement, this arrangement was accepted in exchange for others. The financial losses caused by the closure are estimated to be $7 million per day.

The Israeli authorities have also caused various problems and created impediments, preventing any progress or the completion of any important infrastructure projects related to trade and other sectors of the economy, including the agreed industrial parks and the construction of the seaport and airport in Gaza. Moreover, the Israelis have waged a campaign to obstruct any independent Palestinian franchising rights for foreign companies, essentially obstructing possible Palestinian joint ventures with foreign capital. The Israelis have also repeatedly failed to meet their responsibilities under the agreement with regard to the reimbursement of collected customs and value added tax on goods imported by the Palestinian side.

Such dangerous policies and practices not only violate the agreements reached so far, but they are unjustifiable under any security pretext, and are illogical

regardless of the political goals or orientation of any Israeli Government. Some such measures can only be perceived as emanating from an ill desire for collective punishment and for vindictive control of the Palestinian market and economy.

It is time for the Israeli side to understand that these policies must be immediately halted and reversed. Closures and seizures must stop immediately. Clearly, it is impossible to speak of regional cooperation or to achieve meaningful results at economic regional summits while the Palestinian economy is being destroyed. In fact, we cannot even speak of peace while such an economic situation prevails. The obstruction of development and rehabilitation is an obstruction of the peace process in its entirety.

In spite of all the above, the Palestinian Authority has been trying very hard to improve the living conditions of our people and to build our institutions and economy. For this to succeed, however, we need both a completely different Israeli attitude — in compliance with international law and the agreements reached — and international assistance. Only yesterday the Palestinian side at the highest level presented our national investment plan for the year 1997 to a donor meeting in Paris. We hope that the international community will provide its full support for this plan.

The Palestinian people greatly appreciates the efforts of the international community to assist it in its new and challenging task of building our country and its institutions during this critical period of transition. In this context, we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all those countries and organizations that have generously provided assistance to the Palestinian people. It is our strong hope that the international community will fulfil its pledges to help us to repair our devastated economy and thus alleviate the worsening living conditions of our people.

We also continue to believe that the United Nations has an important and essential role to play in assisting the Palestinian people. At this time, we would like to express our appreciation for the thorough and detailed report presented by the Secretary-General under this item. We would also like to express our appreciation of the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and of the significant role of his Office in facilitating the organization of the work of the United Nations agencies by means of an effective coordinating mechanism on the ground. These efforts have greatly enhanced United Nations activities in the Palestinian territory. In particular, we should like to mention the programmes carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We believe that the draft resolution on this item does not accurately reflect either the realities of the situation on the ground or the difficult and worsening conditions faced by the Palestinian people and the state of the peace process at this stage. However, we understand the importance of maintaining a consensus on this issue, and we are ready at this session to maintain the consensus text.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Fallet (International Committee of the Red Cross) (*interpretation from French*): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is closely following the debate on "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" and is grateful for the opportunity of again sharing a few observations on this topic.

In our opinion, the two main issues at stake with regard to humanitarian coordination are how best to serve the interests of victims in an effective and coherent way and how to make the best use of donor funding. Accordingly, the ICRC practical approach to humanitarian coordination is primarily guided by its focus on victims and by its own accountability to donors.

In recent years, we have noted that effective humanitarian coordination has mostly occurred at the field level and has usually been a process initiated by the humanitarian organization which has been the first or the prime operational actor in an emergency. During the current year, the ICRC has played this role in such places as Chechnya, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka and in certain areas of Somalia, Sudan and Sierra Leone. It has also continued to perform its leading role in tracing missing people and re-establishing family links, coordinating its large-scale operations in this domain with those of other organizations concerned with such matters in places such as the Great Lakes region of Africa and the former Yugoslavia.

The ICRC feels that field coordination works best when humanitarian organizations accept a common set of

ethical and operational standards, such as those laid down in the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations, and when they aim at achieving true complementarity with due respect for each other's mandates and roles. A good example of effective field coordination has been set in Angola, where humanitarian organizations have established sound coordination mechanisms and mutually complement their respective activities. Such efforts, aimed at pragmatic cooperation in the field, and founded on a common humanitarian approach, deserve to be pursued and developed in all emergency or post-conflict situations where a multitude of humanitarian agencies are responding to the needs of victims.

Parallel to operational coordination in the field, the ICRC is also paying increasing attention to coordination and consultations at headquarters level. In the course of this year, it has held several very useful senior management meetings with some of its main operational humanitarian partners. In addition to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, such meetings took place with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as some major international non-governmental organizations.

In early September, there was an exchange of letters between the President of ICRC, Mr. Sommaruga, and the Executive Director of WFP, Mrs. Bertini, at headquarters level on the terms of cooperation between the two organizations and on guiding principles for relief operations in emergency situations due to conflict. A few months ago, an ICRC delegation signed a field level agreement in Rwanda with the country office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, defining the respective responsibilities of the two institutions with regard to protection and visits to detainees in that country.

This bilateral approach has not only served to enhance mutual understanding, but has also been instrumental in paving the way for closer institutional relations and sectorial coordination and cooperation. The ICRC will pursue this approach with its operational partners as an important component of its coordination efforts.

At the multilateral level, the ICRC's prime focus is to assume its role and responsibilities within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and to maintain close coordination with national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and their Federation. In addition, the ICRC actively participates in United Nations coordination mechanisms in order to promote synergy and coherence within the humanitarian community.

At this juncture, we should like to touch briefly on the important role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as the United Nations humanitarian advocate and facilitator of operational coordination. Its efforts to raise issues within the United Nations system, such as that of the impact of economic sanctions or respect for humanitarian mandates, as well as its activities in areas such as demining or the gathering and sharing of information on humanitarian operations and issues, are examples of the Department's functions that deserve special recognition.

We also wish to refer to the issue of anti-personnel landmines as an example of commendable inter-agency cooperation. It is indeed encouraging for the ICRC to see that its worldwide campaign for a total ban on these dreadful weapons has contributed to increased and concerted humanitarian advocacy and mobilization on the part of a large number of organizations.

Some of the recent emergencies — such as those in Liberia, Burundi or currently in eastern Zaire — have shown how important it is for humanitarian organizations and international or regional political bodies to remain in contact and for them to be assigned clearly defined tasks. In this area, it seems sometimes that the international community, finding itself unable to act, pushes the humanitarian agencies to the forefront rather than seeking political solutions.

The ICRC considers it urgent, today, that we go beyond coordination among humanitarian organizations in emergency situations. We must, *inter alia*, enhance consultation with the appropriate political bodies as well as with other bodies that intervene in pre- or post-conflict situations. The ICRC therefore maintains regular bilateral contacts with the Security Council as well as with the most important regional political and security organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The recent emergency situations we have mentioned have clearly demonstrated once again that in many instances it is important to better define the responsibilities and operations of humanitarian organizations on the one hand, and of political organs on

the other, and to better ensure that the activities of both groups have the necessary political and financial support.

In this same context, we should like to reiterate that humanitarian operations cannot take the place of political action. Humanitarian agencies can neither address the underlying causes of conflict nor bring about peaceful settlements; they can neither establish law and order nor guarantee the security conditions necessary for humanitarian activities to be carried out, excluding the possibility of any unacceptable risk for the recipients of the assistance and for the personnel of the organizations. In such situations, humanitarian work therefore depends largely on measures that must be taken, firmly and with determination, on the political front.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call now on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Pedersen (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The demands being placed upon the humanitarian agencies, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, its member national societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are increasing, and the circumstances in which we operate are becoming ever more complex.

It is therefore increasingly important to clarify the difficult issues that confront all actors in the humanitarian field, and to review comprehensively the way in which the organizations act and interact with one another and with other agencies involved in these situations. In this context, the International Federation appreciates very much the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/51/172, on which the current debate is based.

We should like, however, to make a few remarks on some of the topics dealt with in that report. The International Federation is fully aware of the need, brought out in the report, to relate humanitarian work to wider concerns of an economic, social and ecological nature. It is, nevertheless, necessary to proceed with caution in this context. Such linkage could easily invite pressure to compromise humanitarian principles and standards in order to achieve worthwhile, but less certain, longer-term benefits for the populations in question.

In this context, we note and agree with the argument in favour of the need for agencies to be more predictable, or, in other words, to have consistent, high-quality, known areas of competence, an issue that was also brought out in the evaluation of the Great Lakes operations earlier this year. On our side, a similar argument led to the code of conduct that was developed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in collaboration with a number of prominent international non-governmental organizations, and which was welcomed by the more than 130 Governments participating in the twenty-sixth International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, held in Geneva last December.

Setting standards is also of great importance in the development of tools to achieve better monitoring and evaluation, whether of the programmes of the United Nations agencies or of others. In this respect it might be of value to note that the International Federation and the ICRC, in collaboration with a number of non-governmental organizations, are involved in the development of technical standards that may be adopted on a voluntary basis when they become available.

Recognizing that prevention and preparedness are the most effective way to reduce conflict-induced human suffering, the International Federation appreciates very much the work performed by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in developing an early warning system within the Department. The Department's Integrated Regional Information Network is excellent, and we want to congratulate the Department on it.

The International Federation would like to emphasise its support for the views expressed in the report on the need for post-conflict rehabilitation, and on the need to use relief and development to support peace processes. The International Federation has been trying to do so in its sphere of work — in particular in Somalia and in the former Yugoslavia — and is gaining considerable experience in both the benefits and the difficulties of such activities.

It is particularly important, we feel, to emphasize the development of local capacities to deal with difficulties in a local setting. We would, however, like to emphasize that local capacity can be built only by the local people, and that outside agencies must play a supportive and facilitating role. Recent experience has shown that international agencies need to be more modest about their capacity for direct intervention, as well as about their ability to build durable structures if these are not based on the input of the parties most concerned.

A recent illustration of the importance of local capacities was the ability of the volunteers and staff of the Zairian Red Cross to continue operating in the absence of direct external support during the crisis in eastern Zaire.

Another illustration can be found in the work of the Somali Red Crescent Society, which has been able to perform its humanitarian work in a country where the apparatus of the State has disappeared. In both cases, the organizations have benefited from external assistance. In both cases, the key to their achievements has been their own commitment to assisting the most vulnerable and their will to act.

As a result of the events that have taken place over the past few years, the attention of the international community has been drawn more and more towards complex emergencies. The International Federation has played its part in meeting the challenges these have posed. We feel, however, that there is a need to remind the international community of the occurrence of many other disasters caused by floods, storms or other natural phenomena, which also impose great burdens on individuals, peoples and countries. Examples include the drought-induced relief requirements in the Red Sea hills in Sudan and the continuing need to provide assistance in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The needs that have been identified in those two countries, among others, also serve to highlight the decline in food aid availability, a matter brought up at the recent World Food Summit, and the need to secure food supplies for emergency situations before using them for development purposes.

Having offered these few comments on the issue under consideration, the International Federation feels obliged to link this debate with the situation that has been unfolding in the Great Lakes region in Africa over the past few weeks. Improving the quality of humanitarian intervention, ensuring better coordination, achieving standards of behaviour and establishing technical standards are important indeed, but they will ultimately be fruitless unless there is a will among the international community to make use of the tools available and to foster circumstances that allow them to be used.

Unless the international community is willing to deal with the problems that cause emergencies of the magnitude we have witnessed, the humanitarian agencies will be unable to fulfil their mandates and could, indeed, contribute to the worsening, over the longer term, of the situation of those most vulnerable, whom they were created to assist.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/51/L.22 and A/51/L.24, and any other draft resolutions to be submitted under this item, will be taken at a later date to be announced.

I should also like to inform members that the Assembly will consider sub-item (c) of agenda item 21, "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", at a later date to be announced.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to inform members that on Wednesday, 27 November, at 9.30 a.m., the General Committee will meet in Conference Room 4 to consider a request by a number of countries for the inclusion on the Assembly's agenda of an additional item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration" (A/51/232).

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.